

Ramanama The Infallible Remedy

By

MAHATMA GANDHI



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By

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PREFACE

From his very childhood, Gandhiji has worshipped *Rama* as God. To others *Rama* may well appear to be only a son of *Dasha-ratha*—the King of Ayodhya, but to Gandhiji *Rama* is synonymous with *Ishtwara*, *Allah*, *Khuda* and other numerous names of God. Thus, *Ramanama*, in fact, means the Name of God.

The wonderful power and potency of this Divine Name has been realized through personal experience by Gandhiji in every walk of his life, so much so that it is his profound belief that there is not an ailment—physical, mental or spiritual—that cannot yield to the efficacy of *Ramanama*. And so in the pages of this *Brochure* the reader will find unfolded the secret and significance of this Infallible Remedy in a manner all Gandhiji's own.

Lately, Gandhiji has been actively propagating the message of Nature Cure. In this also not only has he introduced *Ramanama* for the first time, but even assigned it the pride of place, regarding it as he does “the truest Nature Cure treatment.” For, he holds that man is not merely an animal but a creature possessing in addition to his body, both mind and soul; and therefore, “it is the duty of a Nature Cure doctor not only to look after the body, but also pay attention to and prescribe for the soul of a patient.” And the “best prescription” for the soul that he suggests is, of course, *Ramanama*.

But Gandhiji has repeatedly emphasized the fact that this “best prescription” will fail to produce the results expected of it, if there is no purity of heart and a living faith in God. Only those, therefore, who are fortunate to possess these both can enjoy real health of body and peace of mind, and have their lives filled with perpetual sunshine.

May this *Brochure* help to guide those who are groping in the dark but who are nevertheless anxious to tread the right path that leads to true harmony and happiness in life!

At Gandhiji's express desire it has been decided to give a comprehensive index in the “*Gandhi Series*” *Brochures* as well. The beginning has been made with this *Brochure* and it is to be hoped that the introduction of this new feature will be found quite useful by the reader.

January 26, 1947
INDEPENDENCE DAY

ANAND T. HINGORANI
7, Edmonstone Road, Allahabad

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A GOOD SEED SOWN

“There was in me a fear of ghosts and spirits. Rambha (my nurse) suggested, as a remedy for this fear, the repetition of *Ramanama*. I had more faith in her than in her remedy, and so at a tender age I began repeating *Ramanama* to cure my fear of ghosts and spirits. . . . I think it is due to the seed sown by that good woman Rambha that to-day *Ramanama* is an infallible remedy for me.”

From my sixth or seventh year up to my sixteenth I was at school, being taught all sorts of things except religion. I may say that I failed to get from the teachers what they could have given me without any effort on their part. And yet I kept on picking up things here and there from my surroundings. The term ‘religion’ I am using in its broadest sense, meaning thereby self-realization or knowledge of self.

Being born in the Vaishnava faith, I had often to go to the *Haveli*. But it never appealed to me. I did not like its glitter and pomp. Also I heard rumours of immorality being practised there, and lost all interest in it. Hence, I could gain nothing from the *Haveli*.

But what I failed to get there I obtained from my nurse, an old servant of the family, whose affection for me I still recall. I have said before that there was in me a fear of ghosts and spirits. Rambha, for that was her name, suggested, as a remedy for this fear, the repetition of *Ramanama*. I had more faith in her than in her remedy, and so at a tender age I began repeating *Ramanama* to cure my fear of ghosts and spirits. This was, of course, short-lived; but the good seed sown in childhood was not sown in vain. I think it is due to the seed sown by that good woman Rambha that to-day *Ramanama* is an infallible remedy for me.

Just about this time, a cousin of mine who was a devotee of the *Ramayana* arranged for my second brother and me to learn *Rama Raksha*. We got it by heart, and made it a rule to recite it every morning after the bath. The practice was kept up as long as we were in Porbandar. As soon as we reached Rajkot, it was forgotten. For, I had not much belief in it. I recited it partly because of my pride in being able to recite *Rama Raksha* with correct pronunciation.

What, however, left a deep impression on me was the reading of the *Ramayana* before my father. During part of his illness my father was in Porbandar. There, every evening, he used to listen to the *Ramayana*. The reader was a great devotee of *Rama*—Ladha Maharaj of Bileshvar. It was said of him that he cured himself of his leprosy not by any medicine, but by applying to the affected parts *bilva* leaves which had been cast away after being offered to the image of Mahadeva in Bileshvar Temple, and by the regular repetition of *Ramanama*. His faith, it was said, had made him whole. This may or may not be true. We at any rate, believed the story. And it is a fact that when Ladha Maharaj began his reading of the *Ramayana* his body was entirely free from leprosy. He had a melodious voice. He would sing the *dohas* (couplets) and *chopais* (quatrains), and explain them, losing himself in the discourse and carrying his listeners along with him. I must have been thirteen at that time, but I quite remember being enraptured by his reading. That laid the foundation of my deep devotion to the *Ramayana*. To-day, I regard the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas as the greatest book in all devotional literature.

EFFICACY OF RAMANAMA

“The latter part of the second fast went fairly hard with me. I had not then completely understood the wonderful efficacy of *Ramanama*, and my capacity for suffering was to that extent less.”

The first penance¹ did not prove difficult for any of us. I had to suspend or stop none of my normal activities. It may be recalled that during the whole of this period of penance I was a strict fruitarian. The latter part of the second fast² went fairly hard with me. I had not then completely understood the wonderful efficacy of *Ramanama*, and my capacity for suffering was to that extent less. Besides, I did not know the technique of fasting, especially the necessity of drinking plenty of water, however nauseating or distasteful it might be. Then, the fact that the first fast had been an easy affair, had made me rather careless as to the second. Thus, during the first I took Kuhne baths every day, but during the second I gave them up after two or three days, and drank very little water, as it was distasteful and produced nausea. The throat became parched and weak and during the last days I could speak only in a very low voice. In spite of this, however, my work was carried on through dictation where writing was necessary. I regularly listened to readings from the *Ramayana* and other sacred books. I had also sufficient strength to discuss and advice in all urgent matters.

¹ The reference is to the self-imposed week's fast as a penance for the moral fall of two inmates of Gandhiji's *Ashram* in Phoenix, South Africa.

² The second fast was of fourteen days' duration and arose out of the same incident that had compelled him to resort to the first one.

THE STAFF OF LIFE

“Our most powerful ally in conquering animal passion is *Ramahama* or some similar *mantra*....One must be completely absorbed in whatever *mantra* one selects....The *mantra* becomes one’s staff of life and carries one through every ordeal.”

I am on my guard when awake. I have acquired control over the body. I am also fairly restrained in speech. But as regards thoughts, there still remains much for me to do. When I wish to concentrate my thoughts upon a particular subject, I am disturbed by other thoughts too, and thus there is a conflict between them. Yet during waking hours, I am able to prevent their collision. I may be said to have reached the stage where I am free from unclean thoughts. But I cannot exercise an equal control over my thoughts in sleep. In sleep, all manner of thoughts enter my mind, and I also dream unexpected dreams. Sometimes, there arises a craving for pleasures previously enjoyed. When these cravings are impure, there are bad dreams. This condition implies sinful life.

My thoughts of sin are scotched, but not killed. If I had acquired perfect mastery over my thoughts, I should not have suffered from pleurisy, dysentery and appendicitis as I have during the last ten years.¹ I believe that when the

¹ I am a humble aspirant for perfection. I know my way to it also. But knowing the way is not reaching its end. If I was perfect, if I had acquired full control over all my passions even in thought, I should be perfect in body. I am free to confess that daily I am obliged to expend a great amount of mental energy in acquiring control over my thoughts. When I have succeeded, if I ever do, think what a store-house of energy would be set free for service! As I hold that **appendicitis** was a result of infirmity of thought or mind, so do I **concede** that my submission to the surgical operation was an additional infirmity of mind. If I was absolutely free of egoism, I would have

soul is sinless, the body which she inhabits is healthy too. That is to say, as the soul progresses towards freedom from sin, the body also tends to become immune from disease. But a healthy body, in this case, does not mean a strong body. A powerful soul lives only in a weak body. As the soul advances in strength, the body languishes. A perfectly healthy body might yet be quite emaciated. A strong body is often diseased. Even if there be no disease, such a body catches infection soon, while a perfectly healthy body enjoys complete immunity from it. Pure blood has the power of expelling all obnoxious germs....

Thus far, I have dealt with *Brahmacharya* in its wider significance. *Brahmacharya* in the popular or current acceptance of the term means control of animal passion in thought, word and deed. This meaning is also correct as the control of passion has been held to be very difficult. The same stress has not been laid upon the control of the palate, and hence the control of passion has grown more difficult and almost impossible....

My experience is that one who has not mastered taste cannot control animal passion either. It is no easy task to conquer the palate. But conquest of passion is bound up with the conquest of the palate. One of the means of controlling taste is to give up spices and condiments altogether or as far as possible. Another and a more effective means is always to cultivate a feeling that we eat just in order to sustain the body and never for taste. We take in air not for taste, but for life. Just as we take water to quench our thirst, in the same way we should take food only to satisfy hunger. Unfortunately, parents make us contract a contrary habit from very childhood. They corrupt us by giving us all manner of delicacies not for our sustenance, but out of mistaken affection. We have got to fight against this unfavourable home atmosphere.

resigned myself to the inevitable; but I wanted to live in the present body. Complete detachment is not a mechanical process. One has to grow into it by patient toil and prayer.—*Young India*: April 3, 1924.

But our most powerful ally in conquering animal passion is *Ramanama* or some similar *mantra*. The *Dwadasha mantra*¹ will also serve the same purpose. One may repeat any *mantra* one pleases. I have suggested *Ramanama* as I have been familiar with it since childhood, and as it is my constant support in my struggles. One must be completely absorbed in whatever *mantra* one selects. One should not mind if other thoughts disturb one during the *japa* (recitation). I am confident that one who still goes on with the *japa* in faith will conquer in the end. The *mantra* becomes one's staff of life and carries one through every ordeal². One should not seek worldly profit from such sacred *mantras*. The characteristic power of these *mantras* lies in their standing guard over personal purity, and every diligent seeker will realize this at once. It should, however, be remembered that the *mantra* is not to be repeated parrot-like. One should pour one's soul into it. The parrot repeats such *mantras* mechanically, we must repeat them intelligently in the hope of driving out undesirable thoughts and with full faith in the power of the *mantras* to assist us to do so.

¹नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ।

² Suggesting to a *Brahmachari* the means to the attainment of *Brahmacharya*, *Gandhiji* wrote:

"The last and not the least is prayer. Let him repeat *Ramanama* with all his heart regularly every day, and ask for divine grace."

—*Young India*: April 29, 1926.

To a struggling soul, *Gandhiji* wrote:

"With the help of *Rama* we have got to overcome the ten-headed *Ravana* of passions within us. Success is bound to be ours if we have faith in *Rama* and surrender ourselves to His grace. Above all, do not lose self-confidence. Avoid indulgence of the palate."—*Young India*: Dec. 20, 1928.

"When your passions threaten to get the better of you, go down on your knees and cry out to God for help. *Ramanama* is my infallible Help. As an extraneous aid, take a hip bath."—From Preface to the Second Edition (1928) of *Self Restraint v. Self-Indulgence*.

OUR ONLY HELP

“*Ramanama* is not for those who tempt God in every way possible and ever expect it to save. It is for those who walk in the fear of God, who want to restrain themselves and cannot in spite of themselves.”

It is easy enough to take a vow under a stimulating influence. But it is difficult to keep to it especially in the midst of temptation. God is our only Help in such circumstances. I, therefore, suggested to the meeting¹ *Ramanama*. *Rama*, *Allah* and God are to me convertible terms. I had discovered that simple people deluded themselves into the belief that I appeared to them in their distress. I wanted to remove the superstition. I knew that I appeared to nobody. It was pure hallucination for them to rely upon a frail mortal. I, therefore, presented them with a simple and well tried formula that has never failed, namely, to invoke the assistance of God every morning before sunrise and every evening before bed-time for the fulfilment of the vows. Millions of Hindus know Him under the name of *Rama*. As a child, I was taught to call upon *Rama* when I was seized with fear. I know many of my companions to whom *Ramanama* has been the great solace in the hour of their need. I presented it to the Dharalas and to the untouchables. I present it also to the reader whose vision is not blurred and whose faith is not damped by over-much learning. Learning takes us through many stages in life, but it fails us utterly in the hour of danger and temptation. Then, faith alone saves.

¹ The reference is to the meeting of the elders of the Kali Paraj Conference held at Vedchhi, near Bardoli, in the middle of January 1925. The elders had taken a vow of wearing *Khadi* and total abstinence from drink.

Ramanama is not for those who tempt God in every way possible and ever expect it to save. It is for those who walk in the fear of God, who want to restrain themselves and cannot in spite of themselves.

RAMANAMA AND SELF-REALIZATION

“*Ramanama* gives one detachment and ballast, and never throws one on one’s balance at critical moments. Self-realization I hold to be impossible without service of, and identification with, the poorest.”

Q. “Can a man or woman attain self-realization by mere recitation of *Ramanama* and without taking part in national service? I ask this question because some of my sisters say that they do not need to do anything beyond attending to family requirements, and occasionally showing kindness to the poor.”

A. This question has puzzled not only women, but many men, and has taxed me to the utmost. I know that there is a school of philosophy which teaches complete inaction and futility of all effort. I have not been able to appreciate that teaching, unless, in order to secure verbal agreement, I were to put my own interpretation on it. In my humble opinion, effort *is* necessary for one’s own growth. It has to be irrespective of results. *Ramanama* or some equivalent is necessary, not for the sake of repetition, but for the sake of purification, as an aid to effort, for direct guidance from above. It is, therefore, never a substitute for effort. It is meant for intensifying and guiding it in proper channel. If all effort is vain, why family cares or an occasional help to the poor? In this very effort is contained the germ of national service. And national service, to me, means service of humanity, even as disinterested service of the family means the same thing. Disinterested service of the family, necessarily, leads one to national service. *Ramanama* gives one detachment and ballast, and never throws one off one’s balance at critical moments. Self-realization I hold to be impossible without service of, and identification with, the poorest.

SEEK HIS HELP

“If you would ask Him to help you, you would go to Him in all your nakedness, approach Him without reservations, also without fear of doubts as to how He can help a fallen being like you. He who has helped millions who have approached Him, is He going to desert you?”

I know from correspondence with the students all over India, what wrecks they have become by having stuffed their brains with information derived from a cartload of books. Some have become unhinged, others have become lunatics, some have been leading a life of helpless impurity. My heart goes out to them when they say that try as much as they might, they are what they are, because they cannot overpower the devil. “Tell us,” they plaintively ask, “how to get rid of the devil, how to get rid of the impurity that has seized us.” When I ask them to take *Ramanama* and kneel before God and seek His help, they come to me and say: “We do not know where God is. We do not know what it is to pray.” That is the state to which they have been reduced....

A Tamil saying has always remained in my memory, and it means: “God is the Help of the helpless.” If you would ask Him to help you, you would go to Him in all your nakedness, approach Him without reservations, also without fear of doubts as to how He can help a fallen being like you. He who has helped millions who have approached Him, is He going to desert you? He makes no exception whatsoever, and you will find that everyone of your prayers will be answered. The prayer of even the most impure will be answered.¹ I am telling this

¹ But prayer is no mere exercise of words or of the ears, it is no mere repetition of empty formula. Any amount of repetition of *Ramanama* is futile, if it fails to stir the soul. It is better in prayer

out of my personal experience. I have gone through the purgatory. Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and everything will be added unto you.

to have a heart without words, than words without a heart. It must be in clear response to the spirit which hungers for it. And even as a hungry man relishes a hearty meal, a hungry soul will relish a heartfelt prayer. And I am giving you a bit of my experience, and that of my companions, when I say that he who has experienced the magic of prayer may do without food for days together, but not a single moment without prayer. For, without prayer there is no inward peace.—*Young India*: January 23, 1930.

BEAUTY OF REPETITION

"Each repetition, or *japa* as it is called, has a new meaning, each repetition carries you nearer and nearer to God. This is a concrete fact."

"This repetition of one and the same thing over and over again jars on me. It may be the defect of my rationalist mathematical temperament. But somehow I cannot like the repetition. For instance, even Bach's wonderful music fails to appeal to me when the text 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do,' is repeated over and over again."

"But even in mathematics, you have your recurring decimals," said Gandhiji smiling.

"But each recurs with a definite new fact," said the mathematician.

"Even so," said Gandhiji, "each repetition, or *japa* as it is called, has a new meaning, each repetition carries you nearer and nearer to God. This is a concrete fact, and I may tell you that you are here talking to no theorist, but to one who has experienced what he says every minute of his life, so much so that it is easier for the life to stop than for this incessant process to stop. It is a definite need of the soul."

"I quite see it, but for the average man it becomes an empty formula."

"I agree, but the best thing is liable to be abused. There is room for any amount of hypocrisy, but even hypocrisy is an ode to virtue. And I know that for ten thousand hypocrites, you would find millions of simple souls who find their solace from it. It is like scaffolding quite essential to a building."

"But," said Pierre Ceresole, "if I may carry the simile a little further, you agree that the scaffolding has to be

removed when the building is complete?"

"Yes, it would be removed when this body is removed."

"Why?"

"Because," said Wilkinson who was closely following the discourse, "we are eternally building."

"Because," said Gandhiji, "we are eternally striving after perfection. God alone is perfect, man is never perfect."

—Mahadev Desai

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

"It (*Ramanama*) is a sun that has brightened my darkest hour. A Christian may find the same solace from the repetition of the name of Jesus, and a Muslim from the name of *Allah*."

To a question by a Missionary friend whether he followed any spiritual practices, Gandhiji said:

I am a stranger to *yogic* practices. The practice I follow is a practice I learnt in my childhood from my nurse. I was afraid of ghosts. She used to say to me: "There are no ghosts, but if you are afraid, repeat *Ramanama*." What I learnt in my childhood has become a huge thing in my mental firmament. It is a sun that has brightened my darkest hour. A Christian may find the same solace from the repetition of the name of Jesus, and a Muslim from the name of *Allah*.¹ All these things have the same implications and they produce identical results under identical circumstances. Only the repetition must not be a lip expression, but part of your very being.

¹ The *Allah* of Islam is the same as the God of Christians and *Ishwara* of Hindus. Even as there are numerous names of God in Hinduism, there are many names of God in Islam. The names do not indicate individuality but attributes; and little man has tried in his humble way to describe mighty God by giving Him attributes, though He is above all attributes, Indescribable, Immeasurable.—*Harijan*: Aug. 12, 1938.

WHY I WISH TO LIVE FOR 125 YEARS ?

“Death does not mean an end of all effort. The Eternal Law, which we term God, will be a mockery if death were the end of such effort. ‘Hereafter’ is a mystery into which we may not peep. We should have enough faith to know that death after a life truly lived is but a prelude to a better and richer life.”

To the question of Shri Sailendranath Chattopadhyaya of the United Press of India as to why he wished to live for 125 years, Gandhiji said:

The idea of 125 years’ life flashed across my mind while I was speaking on August 8, 1942, to the meeting of the A. I. C. C. in Bombay. I might have mentioned the same thing before in private conversation. If I did, I have no recollection.

I am a constant student of the *Ishopanishada* which contains only 18 *mantras*. The first half of the *mantra* means: “Only doing works of service on this earth, you would wish to live 120 or 125 years.” The word in the original denoting the number is translated by the word ‘hundred,’ but I had seen just then a commentary which took the number to mean 120 or 125. I purposely used the highest figure at the meeting as signifying the intense wish to live the longest in order to fulfil my allotted work. In expressing the wish, I only followed my old habit of wishing to act according to the best of my belief.

Moreover, as a naturopath, I believe in the feasibility of living the full span of life. I know that medically speaking the chances are against me. For, I have not always followed Nature’s way. I began to adopt it fairly strictly in South Africa in 1903 or thereabout. Want of *brahmacharya* in early married life must also weigh against the full span.

My conception of Nature Cure, like everything else, has undergone a progressive evolution. And for years I have believed that if a person is filled with the presence of God and has thus attained the state of dispassion, he can surmount handicaps against long life. I have come to the conclusion, based on observation and scriptural reading, that when a man comes to that complete living faith in the Unseen Power and has become free from passion, the body undergoes internal transformation. This does not come about by mere wish. It needs constant vigilance and practice. In spite of both, unless God's grace descends upon one, human effort comes to naught.

The conquest of passion (passion here does not signify animal appetite. Of course, it presupposes full control over such appetite) is more difficult to attain. If it were otherwise, complete non-violence would be easy of achievement. With all my knowledge of, and effort at, non-violence, I have conquered my passion only to the stage of suppression. This involves great strain on both body and mind. Subjugation is the real need. It does not involve absence of feeling. He who identifies himself with every living creature must feel for every kind of woe and yet remain unaffected by it. Action proceeding from such equableness is far-reaching, pervasive and quickest in its effect. Naturally, it is wholly non-violent. The difficulty of attainment need cause no worry. For, being on the right track leads one nearer to the goal. Thus, though I wish, and even hope, to live up to 125 years, what does it matter if I die to-morrow? There is no sense of regret or frustration in me. And there will be no anguish in me over an early death.

Nor does the wish imply slackness of effort in view of the prospect of a longer life. The wish, to be capable of being fulfilled, implies readiness to leave this body without a moment's notice. It cannotes an easy fulfilment from day to day of the daily duty. All strain is an anticipation of death. Death does not mean an end of all effort. The Eternal Law, which we term God, will be a mockery

if death were the end of such effort. 'Hereafter' is a mystery into which we may not peep. We should have enough faith to know that death after a life truly lived is but a prelude to a better and richer life.

QUACKS BETTER THAN DOCTORS

“Doctors make a show of their knowledge and charge exorbitant fees. Their preparations, which are intrinsically worth a few pence, cost shillings. The populace, in its credulity and in the hope of ridding itself of some disease, allows itself to be cheated. Are not quacks, then, whom we know, better than the doctors who put on an air of humaneness?”

I was at one time a great lover of the medical profession. It was my intention to become a doctor for the sake of the country. I no longer hold that opinion. I now understand why the medicine men (the *vaidyas*) among us have not occupied a very honourable status.

The English have certainly effectively used the medical profession for holding us. English physicians are known to have used their profession with several Asiatic potentates for political gain.

Doctors have almost unhinged us. Sometimes I think that quacks are better than highly qualified doctors. Let us consider: the business of a doctor is to take care of the body, or, properly speaking, not even that. Their business is really to rid the body of diseases that may afflict it. How do these diseases arise? Surely, by our negligence or indulgence. I overeat, I have indigestion, I go to a doctor, he gives me medicine, I am cured. I overeat again, I take his pills again. Had I not taken the pills in the first instance, I would have suffered the punishment deserved by me and I would not have overeaten again. The doctor intervened and helped me to indulge myself. My body thereby certainly felt more at ease; but my mind became weakened. A continuance of a course of medicine must, therefore, result in loss of control over the mind.¹

¹ “My quarrel with the medical profession in general is that it ignores the soul altogether and strains at nothing in seeking merely

I have indulged in vice, I contract a disease, a doctor cures me, the odds are that I shall repeat the vice. Had the doctor not intervened, Nature would have done its work, and I would have acquired mastery over myself, would have been freed from vice and would have become happy.

Hospitals are institutions for propagating sin. Men take less care of their bodies and immorality increases. European doctors are the worst of all. For the sake of a mistaken care of the human body, they kill annually thousands of animals. They practise vivisection. No religion sanctions this. All say that it is not necessary to take so many lives for the sake of our bodies.

These doctors violate our religious instinct. Most of their medical preparations contain either animal fat or spirituous liquors; both of these are tabooed by Hindus and Mahomedans. We may pretend to be civilized, call religious prohibitions a superstition and wantonly indulge in what we like. The fact remains that the doctors induce us to indulge, and the result is that we have become deprived of self-control and have become effeminate. In these circumstances, we are unfit to serve the country. To study European medicine is to deepen our slavery.

It is worth considering why we take up the profession of medicine. It is certainly not taken up for the purpose of serving humanity. We become doctors so that we may obtain honours and riches. I have endeavoured to show that there is no real service of humanity in the profession, and that it is injurious to mankind. Doctors make a show of their knowledge and charge exorbitant fees. Their preparations, which are intrinsically worth a few-

to repair such a fragile instrument as the body. Thus ignoring the soul, the profession puts men at its mercy and contributes to the diminution of human dignity and self-control. I note with thankfulness that in the West a school of thought is rising slowly but surely which takes count of the soul in trying to repair the diseased body and which, therefore, relies less on drugs and more on Nature as a powerful healing agent."—*Young India*: June 11, 1925.

pence, cost shillings. The populace, in its credulity and in the hope of ridding itself of some disease, allows itself to be cheated. Are not quacks, then, whom we know, better than the doctors who put on an air of humaneness ?

‘A DREAM OF MY LIFE’

“Nature Cure has been a passion with me ever since my childhood....To serve the cause of Nature Cure has been the dream of my life ever since.”

After 3 months’ quiet stay in Dr. Dinshah Mehta’s Nature Cure Clinic at Poona, Gandhiji returned to Sevagram on November 21, 1945, much rested and refreshed...His Poona visit has once again proved that he is guided by Providence. He had gone there primarily for the sake of Sardar Vallabbhai Patel who needed Nature Cure treatment for his chronic complaints. Gandhiji’s presence by his side braced him up to try the Nature Cure experiment.

But the unexpected result of the sojourn at Poona was that Gandhiji returned from there with another adopted child on his hands, namely the seed of a “Nature Cure University”....The Sardar, whose one anxiety is to conserve Gandhiji for the nation, felt concerned at his burdening himself with fresh responsibilities when he was already bent double under the load that he is carrying on his shoulders. He chafed him about it. “At 76, people entrust their own responsibilities to others and take *sannyas*, and here you are taking other people’s responsibilities.” But both the argument and the banter were lost upon Gandhiji.

He gave a glimpse of the passion that moved him in a short talk after the evening *Ashrama* prayer on his return to Sevagram:

“Nature Cure has been a passion with me ever since my childhood,” he began. “I happened to fall ill with bronchitis while I was in London. Even then, instead of going in for allopathic treatment, I went to a naturopath who charged me a fee of five shillings and prescribed

some simple breathing and physical exercises and dietetic measures which cured me. To serve the cause of Nature Cure has been the dream of my life ever since. I was considered a dunce then by everybody. In fact, I myself shared that opinion about me. When I grew to maturity, I could not afford to pursue this dream in the midst of other multifarious activities. But when Providence provided an opportunity to me at Poona, I seized it as God's gift."

NATURE CURE TREATMENT

“No matter what the ailment from which a man may be suffering, recitation of *Ramanama* from the heart is the sure cure. God has many names. Each person can choose the name that appeals most to him.”

Nature Cure treatment means that treatment which befits man. By “man” is meant not merely man as animal, but as a creature possessing, in addition to his body, both mind and soul. For such a being *Ramanama* is the truest Nature Cure treatment. It is an unfailing remedy. The expression *Ramaban* or infallible cure is derived from it. Nature, too, indicates that for man it is the worthy remedy. No matter what the ailment from which a man may be suffering, recitation of *Ramanama* from the heart is the sure cure. God has many names. Each person can choose the name that appeals most to him. *Ishwara*, *Allah*, *Khuda*, God mean the same.¹ But the recitation must not be parrot-like, it must be born of faith of which endeavour will be some evidence. What should the endeavour consist of? Man should seek out and be content to confine the means of cure to the five elements of which the body is composed, *i.e.*, earth, water, *akash*, sun and air. Of course, *Ramanama* must be the invariable accompaniment. If in spite of this, death supervenes, we may not mind. On the contrary, it should be welcomed. Science has not

¹ God has thousand names, or rather, He is Nameless. We may worship or pray to Him by whichever name that pleases us. Some call Him *Rama*, some *Krishna*, others call Him *Rahim*, and yet call Him God. All worship the same spirit, but as all foods do not agree with all, all names do not appeal to all. Each chooses the name according to his associations, and He being the Indweller, All-Powerful and Omniscient knows our innermost feelings and responds to us according to our desserts—*Young India*: Sept. 24, 1925.

so far discovered any recipe for making the body immortal. Immortality is an attribute of the soul. That is certainly imperishable, but it is man's duty to try to express its purity.

If we accept the above reasoning, it will automatically limit the means permissible under Nature Cure. And man is thereby saved from all the paraphernalia of big hospitals and eminent doctors etc. The large majority of persons in the world can never afford these. Why, then, should the few desire what the many cannot have?

RAMANAMA—THE INFALLIBLE REMEDY

“*Ramanama* is no copy-book maxim. It is something that has to be realized through experience. One who has had personal experience alone can prescribe it, not any other.”

Shri Ganesh Shastri Joshi, *Vaidya*, tells me after reading my article on Nature Cure in *Harijan* of 3rd March, 1946, that in *Ayurveda*, too, there is ample testimony to the efficacy of *Ramanama* as a cure for all disease. Nature Cure occupies the place of honour and in it *Ramanama* is the most important. When Charaka, Vagbhata and other giants of medicine in ancient India wrote, the popular name for God was not *Rama* but *Vishnu*. I myself have been a devotee of Tulsidas from my childhood and have, therefore, always worshipped God as *Rama*. But I know that if, beginning with *Omkar*, one goes through the entire gamut of God's names current in all climes, all countries and all languages, the result is the same. He and His Law are one. To observe His Law is, therefore, the best form of worship. A man who becomes one with the Law does not stand in need of vocal recitation of the name. In other words, an individual with whom contemplation on God has become as natural as breathing is so filled with God's spirit that knowledge or observance of the Law becomes second nature, as it were, with him. Such an one needs no other treatment.

The question, then, arises as to why, in spite of having this prince of remedies at hand, we know so little about it; and why even those who know, do not remember Him or remember Him only by lip service, not from the heart. Parrot-like repetition of God's name signifies failure to recognize Him as the panacea for all ills.

How can they? This sovereign remedy is not administered by doctors, *vaidyas*, *hakims* or any other

medicinal practitioners. These have no faith in it. If they were to admit that the spring of the Holy Ganges could be found in every home, their very occupation or means of livelihood would go. Therefore, they must perforce rely on their powders and potions as infallible remedies. Not only do these provide bread for the doctor, but the patient, too, seems to feel immediate relief. If a medical practitioner can get a few persons to say: "So and so gave me a powder and I was cured," his business is established.

Nor, it must be borne in mind, would it really be of any use for doctors to prescribe God's name to patients unless they themselves were conscious of its miraculous powers. *Ramanama* is no copy-book maxim. It is something that has to be realized through experience. One who has had personal experience alone can prescribe it, not any other.

The *Vaidyajaraj* has copied out for me four verses. Out of these, Charak's is the simplest and most apt. It means that if one were to obtain mastery over even one out of the thousand names of Vishnu, all ailments would vanish:

विष्णुं सहस्रमूर्धानं चराचरपतिं विभुम् ।
स्तुवन्नामसहस्रेण ज्वरान् सर्वान् व्यपोहति ॥

WHAT IS NATURE CURE ?

“...The eradication of the patient's ailment under Nature Cure marks only the beginning of a way of life in which there is no room for illness or disease. Nature Cure is thus a way of life, not a course of treatment.”

Although the bulk of his (Gandhiji's) time during his five days' stay in Bombay was taken up with work in connection with the Working Committee's meetings, he found time to introduce to the Bombay public his latest born, *i.e.*, the project of establishing a Nature Cure Centre for the poor. “What has been a hobby with me for the last fifty years has now become a passion,” he remarked in a letter to the Sardar¹ recently. “If I find that I have a talent for the service of the poor and do not make full use of it, I shall be set down as a fool,” he remarked to another friend. And so at seventysix, in the evening of his life, he has decided to add one more to his many activities.

And why has it gripped him like this ? He explained the difference between the Nature Cure system of his conception and the other systems of cure to a casual visitor who saw him at Birla House. “In the case of the ordinary method of treatment, the patient comes to the doctor to take drugs that would cure him. The doctors prescribe the drug. With the relief of abnormal symptoms in the patient, his function ends and with that his interest in the patient. The Nature Cure man does not ‘sell a cure’ to the patient. He teaches him the right way of living in his home which would not only cure him of his particular ailment, but also save him from falling ill in future. The ordinary doctor or *vaidya* is interested mostly in the study

¹ Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

of disease. The Nature Curist is interested more in the study of health. His real interest begins where that of the ordinary doctor ends; the eradication of the patient's ailment under Nature Cure marks only the beginning of a way of life in which there is no room for illness or disease. Nature Cure is thus a way of life, not a course of 'treatment'."

—Pyarelal

RAMANAMA IN NATURE CURE

“The recitation of *Ramanama* as a remedy for spiritual ailments is as old as the hills. But the greater includes the less. And my claim is that the recitation of *Ramanama* is a sovereign remedy for our physical ailments also.”

Explaining the significance and scope of Nature Cure and the place of Ramanama therein to the prayer gathering at Rungta House, Bombay, Gandhiji said:

It is not claimed that Nature Cure can cure all disease. No system of medicine can do that or else we should all be immortals. But it enables one to face and bear down with unperturbed equanimity and peace of mind an illness which it cannot cure. If once we decide that what cannot be shared by the millions should be taboo for us, we are driven to Nature as the only cure—all for the rich and the poor alike.

In the armoury of the Nature Curist, *Ramanama* is the most potent weapon. Let no one wonder at it. A noted *Ayurvedic* physician told me the other day: ‘All my life I have been administering drugs. But since you have prescribed *Ramanama* as a cure for physical ailments, it has occurred to me that what you say has, too, the authority of Vagbhata and Charaka’. The recitation of *Ramanama* as a remedy for spiritual ailments is as old as the hills. But the greater includes the less. And my claim is that the recitation of *Ramanama* is a sovereign remedy for our physical ailments also. A Nature Cure man won’t tell the patient: ‘Invite me and I shall cure you of your ailment.’ He will only tell about the all-healing principle that is in every being and how one can cure oneself by evoking it and making it an active force in his life. If India could realize the power of that principle, not only

would we be free but we would be a land of healthy individuals, too—not the land of epidemics and ill-health that we are to-day.

The potency of *Ramanama* is, however, subject to certain conditions and limitations. *Ramanama* is not like black magic. If some one suffers from surfeit and wants to be cured of its after-effects so that he can again indulge himself at the table, *Ramanama* is not for him. *Ramanama* can be used only for a good, never for an evil end, or else thieves and robbers would be the greatest devotees. *Ramanama* is for the pure in heart and for those who want to attain purity and remain pure. It can never be a means for self-indulgence. The remedy for surfeit is fasting, not prayer. Prayer can come in only when fasting has done its work. It can make fasting easy and bearable. Similarly, the taking of *Ramanama* will be a meaningless farce when at the same time you are drugging your system with medicines. A doctor who uses his talent to pander to the vices of his patient degrades himself and his patient.¹ What worse degradation can there be for man than that instead of regarding his body as an instrument of worshipping his Maker, he should make it the object of adoration and waste money like water to keep it going anyhow. *Ramanama*, on the other hand, purifies while it cures, and, therefore, it elevates. Therein lies its use as well as its limitation.

¹ We want healers of souls rather than of bodies. The multiplicity of hospitals and medical men is no sign of civilization. The less we and others pamper our body, the better for us and the world.—*Young India*: September 29, 1927.

AT URULI KANCHAN

“*Ramanama* cannot perform the miracle of restoring to you the lost limb. But it can perform the still greater miracle of helping you to enjoy an ineffable peace in spite of the loss while you live, and rob death of its sting and the grave its victory at the journey’s end.”

Gandhiji did not stay for many days in the Nature Cure Clinic at Poona on his return from Bombay. Uruli Kanchan into which Gandhiji moved on the afternoon of the 22nd inst. is a small station on the Sholapur-Poona line with a population of about 3,000. It has a railway telegraph office and a post office, but no telephone. The mail and the express trains do not stop here. The climate is good, the air bracing. There is a plentiful supply of filtered water from the military camp water works nearby. The locality grows fruits like the grape, orange and *papaiya* in profusion.

A few days back, a deputation of nearly all the leading men of the place had waited on Gandhiji at the Nature Cure Clinic, Poona, to request him to establish his proposed Nature Cure Centre for the poor there. They promised to provide enough land for the purpose and their full co-operation besides donating Rs. 10,000 to the Nature Cure Trust for the experiment at Uruli. Shri Datar, a retired railway contractor, vacated his bungalow and offered it for Gandhiji’s temporary residence.

Congregational prayer was held on the very first day at the outskirts of the village, the mass singing of *Ramadhun* being introduced here as in other places. Taking as his text the hymn that had been sung, Gandhiji presented *Ramanama* to the village-folk assembled there as a natural Therapeutic No. 1 for the cure of bodily ailments: “In the song that we have just sung the devotee says: ‘O Hari,

You are the reliever of the people's distress.' The promise here is universal. It is not qualified or restricted to any particular kind of ailment." He told them of the conditions of success. The efficacy of *Ramanama* would depend on whether it was or was not backed by a living faith. "If you are subject to anger, eat and sleep for indulgence, not solely for sustenance, you do not know the meaning of *Ramanama*. Your recitation of it is mere lip service. *Ramanama*, to be efficacious, must absorb your entire being during its recitation and express itself in your whole life."

FIRST PATIENTS

Patients began to come in from the next morning. There were about thirty of them. Gandhiji examined five or six of them and prescribed to them all, more or less, the same treatment with slight variations, according to the nature of each case, *i.e.*, recitation of *Ramanama*, sun bath, friction and hip baths, a simple eliminative diet of milk, butter-milk, fruit and fruit juices with plenty of clean fresh water to drink. "It has truly been observed," he explained at the evening prayer gathering, "that all mental and physical ailments are due to one common cause. It is, therefore, but natural that there should be a common remedy for them, too. There is a unity of cure, as there is in disease. The *Shastras* say so. Therefore, I prescribed *Ramanama* and almost the same treatment to all the patients who came to me this morning. But we have a knack of explaining away the *Shastras* in life, when they do not suit our convenience. We have deluded ourselves into the belief that the *Shastras* are meant only for the benefit of the soul in the life to come, that the end of *dharmā* is to acquire merit after death. I do not share that view. If *dharmā* has no practical use in this life, it has none for me in the next.

"There is hardly anyone in this world who is completely free from ailment whether bodily or mental. For some of these, there is no earthly cure. For instance,

Ramanama cannot perform the miracle of restoring to you a lost limb. But it can perform the still greater miracle of helping you to enjoy an ineffable peace¹ in spite of the loss while you live, and rob death of its sting and the grave its victory at the journey's end. Since death must come soon or late to everyone, why should one worry over the time."

THIS IS MY INDIA

The number of patients increased from 30 to 43 on the third day. "This is good," remarked Gandhiji, "because it shows that those who need Nature Cure treatment are coming forward to avail themselves of it." If the work proceeded according to plan, he explained at the evening prayer gathering, he intended to stay for at least four months in the year in their midst. During his absence his colleagues would continue to direct and guide them according to his instructions. "The practice of Nature Cure does not require high academic qualifications or much erudition. Simplicity is the essence of universality. Nothing that is meant for the benefit of the millions requires much erudition. The latter can be acquired only by the few and, therefore, can benefit the rich only. But India lives in her seven lakhs of villages—obscure, tiny, out-of-the-way villages, where the population in some cases hardly exceeds a few hundred, very often not even a few score. I would like to go and settle down in some such village. That is real India, my India, for which I live. You cannot take to these humble people the paraphernalia of highly qualified doctors and hospitals equipment. In simple natural remedies and *Ramanama* lies their only hope."

He had been told that there was hardly any disease in Uruli. Probably, what was meant was that no epidemic was prevalent, that being the popular conception of dis-

¹ There is no greater spell-binder of peace than the name of God.—*Press Report*: January 10, 1946.

ease. But from the cases that had come to him during the last two days, it was clear that ill-health there was in plenty in Uruli. "If you do as I ask you to," he told the villagers, "Uruli will become an ideal village, to see which people will come from far."

He, then, proceeded to give them his first discourse on Nature Cure principles. The following is its gist:

NATURE CURE EXPOUNDED

"Man's physical body is composed of five natural elements, *i.e.*, air, water, earth, fire or *tejas* (the energizing principle) and ether (space). The soul quickens it.

"The most essential of these is air. Man can live without food for several weeks, without water for some time, but without air he cannot live for more than a few minutes. God has, therefore, made air universally available. Shortages of food or water there may be at times, but of air never. In spite of it, we foolishly deprive ourselves of God's blessing of fresh and pure air by sleeping within doors, with doors and windows shut. One may shut the doors and windows if he is afraid of thieves at night. But why should one shut oneself up?

"To get fresh air, one must sleep in the open. But it is no good sleeping in the open only to breathe dust and dirt-laden air. The place where you sleep must be free from both. Some people cover their faces as a protection against dust and cold. It is a remedy worse than the disease. Then, there is the evil habit of breathing through the mouth. Mouth is the organ of ingestion. It is not the organ of breathing. The air passing through the nasal passages is filtered and purified and at the same time warmed up before it enters the lungs.

"Anyone who fouls the air by spitting about carelessly, throwing refuse and rubbish or otherwise dirtying the ground, sins against man and Nature. Man's body is the temple of God. Anyone who fouls the air that is to enter that temple desecrates it. He takes the name of *Rama* in vain."

In the end, he warned them that they should be prepared to find in him a hard taskmaster. If he stayed in their midst, he would neither spare himself nor them. He would visit their homes, inspect their streets, their drains, their kitchens, their latrines. He would tolerate neither dust nor dirt anywhere.

—*Pyarelal*

SOVEREIGN REMEDY

“*Ramanama* has the flavour of faith-healing and Christian Science; yet, it is quite distinct from them. Recitation of *Ramanama* is a mere symbol of the reality for which it stands. If one is knowingly filled with the presence of God within, one is that moment free from all ailment—physical, mental or moral.”

“I read with avidity every word that flows from your pen. I can hardly wait till I have finished reading the new issue of *Haryan* when it arrives. This results in a strange ego in me, demanding the object of my adoration to be perfect according to my light! Anything which appears obviously unconvincing makes me restless. Your new note in *Nature Cure*—reciting of *Ramanama* as the sure remedy—leaves me completely bewildered. The modern youth refrains from challenging some of your views out of toleration. Their attitude may be summed up in the following:

‘Well, Gandhiji has taught us a whole lot of things; he has elevated us to unimaginable heights; he has, above all, brought *Swaraj* within our reach: why not ‘suffer’ his *Ramanama* ‘fad’?’

“*Inter alia* you have said the following:

‘No matter what the ailment from which a man may be suffering, recitation of *Ramanama* from the heart is the sure cure.’—*Haryan*: 3-3-’46.

‘Man should seek out and be content to confine the means of cure to the five elements of which the body is composed, *i.e.*, earth, water, *akash*, sun and air’.—*Haryan*: 3-3-’46.

‘And my claim is that the recitation of *Ramanama* is a sovereign remedy for our physical ailments also’.—*Haryan*: 7-4-’46.

“At first, when you introduced this new note in the system of *Nature Cure*, I thought you were merely putting in other words a kind of psycho-therapy or ‘Christian Science’ based on faith. These have their place in every system of medicine. I interpreted my first quotation above in that light. The second sentence quoted above is difficult to grasp. After all, it is physically impossible for medicines to be composed of anything but the five elements to which you refer, and which you say must be the sole means of cure.

"If faith is what you insist on, I have no quarrel; it is necessary for the patient to co-operate in getting well also by faith. But it is difficult to accept that faith alone would cure 'our physical ailments also.' Two years ago, my little daughter was struck by infantile paralysis; it was the most modern treatment that saved the child from becoming a cripple for life. You would agree that it would not avail to ask a two and a half year old child to recite *Ramanama* to be rid of infantile paralysis; and I would like to see you persuade any mother to do the recitation (and recitation alone) on her child's behalf.

"The authority from Charaka that you have quoted in the issue of March 24th, leaves me cold; *you* have taught me not to accept anything, however ancient and however authoritative it may be, if it does not appeal to my heart."

Thus writes a teacher of youth. While I am eager to be in the good graces of the student world, my eagerness has well-defined limitations. For one, I must please them with the rest of the world, which is admittedly much larger. In no case should a servant of the public pander to any person or class.

If those whom my correspondent represents really think that anything I have done has taken India to unimaginable heights, they should extend to my so-called fads slightly more than toleration. Toleration by itself will do them and me no good. It may easily promote laziness in them, and false self-assurance in me. Let them think well before rejecting even a fad. Faddists are not always to be despised. Fads have before now made their owners mount the gallows.

Ramanama has the flavour of faith-healing and Christian Science;¹ yet, it is quite distinct from them. Recitation

¹ During Lord Lothian's talk on the last day he mentioned Christian Science and asked for Gandhiji's opinion thereon. "Since man is inseparably related to God," he said, "in proportion as he recognizes the indissoluble relationship to God, he is free from sin and from disease. That is how faith heals. God is Truth and Health and Love."

"And He is Physician, too," said Gandhiji. "I have no quarrel with Christian Science. I accept the doctrine *in toto*, but I do not believe in many Christian Scientists. It is one thing to have an

of *Ramanama* is a mere symbol of the reality for which it stands. If one is knowingly filled with the presence of God within, one is that moment free from all ailment—physical, mental or moral. That we do not see the type in life is not to disprove the truth of the statement. My argument is admittedly useless for those who have no faith in God.

Christian Scientists, faith-healers and psycho-therapists may, if they will, bear witness somewhat to the truth underlying *Ramanama*. I cannot take the reader a long way with me through reason. How is one to prove to a person who has never tasted sugar, that sugar is sweet, except by asking him to taste it?

I must not reiterate here the conditions attendant upon the heart recitation of the sacred syllable.

The authority of Charaka is good for those who have some belief in *Ramanama*. Others may dismiss the authority from their consideration.

Children are irresponsible. *Ramanama* is undoubtedly not for them. They are helpless beings at the mercy of their parents. They show what tremendous responsibility parents bear to them and society. I have known parents

intellectual belief and another thing to have a heart-grasp of the truth. I can quite endorse the statement that all illness is sin, that when a man has even a cough it is due to sin. My blood pressure is the result of strain and over-work. But why should I have over-worked myself? All over-work and hurry is sin. And I know only too well that it was perfectly possible for me to avoid all doctors. What I do not understand about Christian Scientists is that they make altogether too much of physical health and disease."

"So long as one recognizes that disease is sin, it is all right," said Lord Lothian. "Even the Gita says that one has to renounce the fruit of the five senses which is *Maya*. God is Life and Love and Health."

"I have put it somewhat differently," said Gandhiji. "God is Truth, which is the same thing as God is Life. And, then, I have said that Truth and Love are faces of the same coin, and Love is the means to find Truth which is the end"—M.D.

—*Harijan*: January 29, 1938.

who have trifled with their children's diseases even to the extent of trusting them to their (the parents') recitation of *Ramanama*.

Lastly, the argument about everything, even medicines, being from '*panch mahabhutas*' betrays a hasty confusion of thought. I have only to point it out to remove it.

MY RAMA

“My *Rama*, the *Rama* of our prayers is not the historical *Rama*, the son of Dasharatha—the King of Ayodhya. He is the eternal, the unborn, the one without a second. Him alone I worship, His aid alone I seek, and so should you. He belongs equally to all.”

In the course of one of his prayer addresses at Delhi, Gandhiji referred to the singing of Ramadhun and said:

All might find it difficult to correctly recite the Gita verses which are in Sanskrit. But all can take part in the singing of *Ramadhun*. The mass singing of *Ramadhun* to the accompaniment of *tal* is prayer reduced to its simplest terms.

To the question how could non-Hindus take part in it, he replied:

I laugh within myself when someone objects that *Rama* or the chanting of *Ramanama* is for the Hindus only, how can Mussalmans, therefore, take part in it? Is there one God for the Mussalmans and another for the Hindus, Parsis or Christians? No, there is only one omnipotent, and omnipresent God. He is named variously and we remember Him by the name which is most familiar to us.¹

¹ *Addressing the prayer gathering at Mashimpur (East Bengal), Gandhiji said:*

Ramanama is another name of *Khuda* or God. I want my Muslim brothers to understand that the God of the Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees and all other communities of the world is one. To me all religions are of equal status. Different religions are different leaves of the same tree.—*Press Report*: Jan. 8, 1947.

My *Rama*, the *Rama* of our prayers is not the historical *Rama*, the son of Dashratha—the King of Ayodhya. He is the eternal, the unborn, the one without a second. Him alone I worship, His aid alone I seek, and so should you.² He belongs equally to all. I, therefore, see no reason why a Mussalman or anybody should object to taking His name. But he is in no way bound to recognize God as *Ramanama*. He may utter to himself *Allah* or *Khuda* so as not to mar the harmony of the sound.

² You may say you do not believe in Him. You do not know that but for His will you could not draw a single breath. Call Him *Ishwara*, *Allah*, God, *Abura Mazda*. His names are as innumerable as there are men. He is one without a second. He alone is great. There is none greater than He. He is timeless, formless, stainless. Such is my *Rama*. He alone is my Lord and Master.—*Uarijan*: Nov. 24, 1946.

A SURE AID

"There is no doubt that *Ramanama* is the surest aid. If recited from the heart, it charms away every evil thought; and evil thought gone, no corresponding action is possible."

A correspondent suggests three aids to self-control, of which two are outward and one is inward. The inward help he describes as follows:

"A third thing that helps towards self-control is *Ramanama*. This has got the terrible power of converting one's sex desire into a divine longing for the Lord. In fact, it seems to me from experience that the sex desire present in almost all human beings is a form of *Kundalini Shakti* left to its own natural growth and development. Just as man has fought against Nature ever since creation, so also he should fight against this natural tendency of his *Kundalini* and see that it acts upward instead of downward. Once the *Kundalini* begins to act upward, its direction is towards the brain; and gradually will it dawn upon such a man that he and all whom he sees around him are but different manifestations of the same Lord."

There is no doubt that *Ramanama* is the surest aid. If recited from the heart, it charms away every evil thought; and evil thought gone, no corresponding action is possible.¹ The outward helps are all useless if the mind is weak. They are superfluous if the mind is pure. This must not be taken to mean that a pure-minded man can take all the

¹ I have no doubt that there is a key to lock out undesirable thoughts, but every one has to find it out for himself. Saints and seers have left their experiences for us, but they have given us no infallible and universal prescriptions. For perfection or freedom from error comes only from grace, and so seekers after God have left us *mantras*, such as *Ramanama*, hallowed by their own austerities and charged with their purity. Without an unreserved surrender to His grace, complete mastery over thought is impossible—From *My Experiments with Truth*: Part IV, Chapter XXV.

liberties and still keep safe. Such a man simply will not take any liberties with himself. His whole life will be an infallible testimony to the inward purity. The Gita truly says that mind makes the man and unmakes him. Milton paraphrases the same thought when he says: "The mind is its own place and in itself can make a heaven of hell and hell of heaven."

AYURVEDA AND NATURE CURE

“*Ramanama* has, in fact, no connection with superstition. It is Nature’s supreme law. Whoever observes it, is free from disease and *vice versa*. The same law which keeps one free from disease, applies also to its cure.”

Vaidya Vallabharam, Professor of Ayurveda and Vanaspati Shastra writes :

“By combining *Ayurveda* with allopathy, the essentials of the former science have been almost destroyed. Cure through *Ayurveda* is based on the five elements. Misuse of air will cause wind; that of fire, bile; of water, phlegm. The progress of *Ayurveda* depends on its recognition of these basic factors in disease. It holds that for the cure of such complaints as mentioned above, the remedy lies in the proper use of air, light and water. The religious factor must be there, too, in order scrupulously to observe the laws of Nature. *Pathya* (diet cure) is a scientific term of the greatest importance in *Ayurveda*. Its real meaning is that freedom from disease depends on a proper observance of the laws of Nature.

“Vagbhata says:

‘Without strict dieting, of what use is medicine ?

With strict dieting, why any other medicine ?’ ”

I have no doubt whatsoever that the spread of *Ramanama* and pure living are the best and cheapest preventives of disease. The tragedy is that doctors, *bakims* and *vaidyas* do not make use of *Ramanama* as the sovereign of cures. There is no place given to it in current *Ayurvedic* literature, except it be in the shape of a charm which will drive people further into the well of superstition. *Ramanama* has, in fact, no connection with superstition. It is Nature’s supreme law. Whoever observes it, is free from disease and *vice versa*. The same law which keeps one free from disease, applies also to its cure. An apt question is as to why a man who recites *Ramanama* regularly and leads a pure

life should ever fall ill. Man is by nature imperfect. A thoughtful man strives after perfection, but never attains it. He stumbles on the way, however, unwittingly. The whole of God's law is embodied in a pure life. The first thing is to realize one's limitations. It should be obvious that the moment one transgresses those limits, one falls ill. Thus, a balanced diet eaten in accordance with needs gives one freedom from disease. How is one to know what is the proper diet for one? Many such enigmas can be imagined. The purport of it all is that everyone should be his own doctor and find out his limitations. The man who does so will surely live up to 125.

Vaidya Vallabharam asks whether well-known home drugs and condiments can be included in Nature Cure. Doctor friends claim that they do nothing more than investigating the laws and act accordingly and that, therefore, they are the best Nature Cure men. Everything can be explained away in this manner. All I want to say is that anything more than *Ramanama* is really contrary to true Nature Cure. The more one recedes from this central principle, the farther away one goes from Nature Cure. Following this line of thought, I limit Nature Cure to the use of the five elements. But a *vaidya* who goes beyond this and uses such herbs, as grow or can be grown in his neighbourhood, purely for service of the sick and not for money, may claim to be a Nature Cure man. But where are such *vaidyas* to be found? Today, most of them are engaged in making money. They do no research work and it is because of their greed and mental laziness that the science of *Ayurveda* is at a low ebb. Instead of admitting their own weakness, they throw the blame on Government and public men. Government is powerless to help those who through their own fault become helpless and thereby drag the name of *Ayurveda* in the mud.

NATURE CURE IN KANCHANGAON

“Nature Cure implies an ideal mode of life and that, in its turn, presupposes ideal living conditions in towns and villages. The name of God is, of course, the hub round which the Nature Cure system revolves.”

I settled down and started work in Uruli Kanchan in response to the invitation of the inhabitants there, in the hope of making it a model Nature Cure Centre for the villages of India. The people of the village had promised their co-operation. They were to have provided the land and erect buildings on it. But that has not yet materialized. They have given the money. But that is not enough for buying land and buildings. They have to find the land and to erect the buildings on it. Their active interest in it is more important than mere monetary aid.

According to the reports received from co-workers there, the inhabitants of Kanchangaon have begun to understand and appreciate Nature Cure. And the workers have developed such self-confidence that they won't mind, if I do not return there before June. They say that the people are co-operating with them so wholeheartedly that they can well afford to wait till I descend from Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani at the end of the warm season. All this has filled me with hope.

Nature Cure consists of two parts. Firstly, to cure diseases by taking the name of God or *Ramanama*; and, secondly, to prevent illness by the inculcation of right and hygienic living. The report from the village says that the inhabitants are co-operating with them in keeping the village clean. I hold that where the rules of personal, domestic and public sanitation are strictly observed and due care is taken in the matter of diet and exercise, there should be no occasion for illness or disease. Where there is

absolute purity, inner and outer, illness becomes impossible. If the village people could but understand this, they would not need doctors, *bakims* or *vaidyas*.

In Kanchangaon, there are hardly any cows. That is unfortunate. There are some she-buffaloes. But all the evidence that has come to me so far shows that buffalo's milk is no match for cow's in the health-giving quality. The *vaidyas* specially recommend cow's milk for patients. I, therefore, hope that the people of Uruli Kanchan will keep a herd of cows to insure a supply of fresh clean cow's milk to all. Milk is an absolute necessity for health.

Then, the sooner the buildings are erected the better. In the first place, it is a question as to how long we ought to go on using Shri Datar's bungalow. Secondly, and that is more important, so long as there is not adequate housing accommodation, proper treatment of patients is not possible. Accommodation for indoor patients is a necessity, I shall always hope that Kanchangaon will become an ideal village. Nature Cure implies an ideal mode of life and that, in its turn, presupposes ideal living conditions in towns and villages. The name of God is, of course, the hub round which the Nature Cure system revolves.

WHY DOCTORS ?

“The doctors examine me, but I depend on none but God. He is the Master of every breath I take. If He wills it, He will keep me up to 125 years. If not, He might carry me off any moment, leaving the medical friends staring as helpless spectators.”

Q. Why do you go to the doctors for examination and diagnosis and not to the *vaidyas* ?

A. The *vaidyas* do not possess the knowledge of the human body as the doctors do. The basis of diagnosis in *Ayurveda* is the theory of *tridosh*. They have not got to the bottom even of that. The doctors are ever carrying on research and making new discoveries.¹ One either

¹ My quarrel with the professors of *Ayurvedic* system is that many of them, if not indeed a vast majority of them, are mere quacks pretending to know much more than they actually do, arrogating to themselves an infallibility and ability to cure all diseases. These gentlemen have no humility in them. They will not study the *Ayurvedic* system and wrest from it the secrets which appear at present to be completely hidden from the world. They impute to *Ayurveda* an omnipotence which it does not possess, and in so doing they have made it a stagnant system instead of a gloriously progressive science. I know of not a single discovery or invention of any importance on the part of *Ayurvedic* physicians as against a brilliant array of discoveries and inventions which Western physicians and surgeons boast. In fact, *Ayurvedic* physician's diagnosis as a rule consists in feeling the pulse which, I have known many to claim, enables them to know even whether the patient is suffering from appendicitis. Whether the science of the pulse ever enabled ancient physicians to diagnose every known disease, no one can tell. But it is certain that the claim cannot be sustained at the present moment. The only thing *Ayurvedic* physicians can safely claim is a knowledge of some vegetable and metallic drugs of great potency which some of them succeed in administering for diseases they only guess.

—*Young India*: June 11, 1925.

goes forward or backward. Nothing remains static in the world. Those who become static, become lifeless. God alone is static, but amazing as it may sound, He is described both as motionless and full of motion.

Moreover, doctors and *vaidyas* are my friends. The doctors have clung to me. One of them has become more than my own daughter. One's own daughter can leave her father; how can one who has chosen to become daughter? The *vaidyas* themselves use, though indifferently, the methods of diagnosis used by the doctors, or else they advise the patient to go to the doctors for it. The *vaidyas* possess the knowledge of certain drugs which they use effectively.

But the doctors, *vaidyas* and *bakims* all slave for money. They do not take to the profession purely from a spirit of service.² That some of them have that spirit does not contradict my statement. Nature Cure is the only thing which has come into existence purely from the point of view of selfless service. To-day, even that has become a means of making money. Thus, money has taken the place of God. The doctors examine me, but I depend on none but God. He is the Master of every breath I take. If He wills it, He will keep me up to 125 years. If not, He might carry me off any moment, leaving the medical friends staring as helpless spectators.

² Physicians served the society and rested content with what it gave them, but now they have become traders and even a danger to society. The medical and the legal professions were deservedly called liberal when the motive was purely philanthropic—*Young India*: November 24, 1927.

RIDICULING RAMANAMA

“Constant vigilance under all circumstances is essential. A votary of truth cannot act otherwise. Even an all-powerful remedy like *Ramanama* can become useless for lack of wakefulness and care, and become one more addition to the numerous current superstitions.”

Q. You know we are so ignorant and dull that we actually begin to worship the images of our great men instead of living up to their teachings. *Ramalila*, *Krishnalila* and the recently opened Gandhi temple are a living testimony of that. *The Ramanama Bank* in Benares and wearing clothes printed with *Ramanama*, is, in my opinion, a caricature and even insult of *Ramanama*. Don't you think that under these circumstances your telling the people to take to *Ramanama* as a sovereign remedy for all ailments is likely to encourage ignorance and hypocrisy? *Ramanama* repeated from the heart can be a sovereign remedy, but, in my opinion, religious education of the right type alone can lead to that state.

A. You are right. There is so much superstition and hypocrisy around that one is afraid even to do the right thing. But if one gives way to fear, even truth will have to be suppressed. The golden rule is to act fearlessly upon what one believes to be right. Hypocrisy and untruth will go on in the world. Our doing the right thing will result in their decrease, if any, never in their increase. The danger is that when we are surrounded by falsehood on all sides, we might be caught in it and begin to deceive ourselves. We should be careful not to make a mistake out of our laziness and ignorance. Constant vigilance under all circumstances is essential. A votary of truth cannot act otherwise. Even an all-powerful remedy like *Ramanama* can become useless for lack of wakefulness and care, and become one more addition to the numerous current superstitions.

NATURE CURE FOR THE POOR

“The central feature of Nature Cure treatment is *Ramanama*. But it must come from the heart, if it is to be a remedy for all one’s ailments.”

Q. Is it not a cruel joke to ask the poor villager to live on orange juice when he cannot afford even ordinary diet? He has to work throughout the day to feed his wife and children. His land and his children mean more to him than life itself. Nature Cure is meant for the rich who have plenty of money and time at their disposal.

If you really wish to serve the villagers through Nature Cure, you should see that the right type of Nature Cure Homes are started everywhere. At these Homes the patients should get free food, clothing and bedding. And, if the patient happens to be a wage earner, arrangements should be made to support his family.

You have said Nature Cure means re-orientation of the way of living. Is it not necessary that education in that direction should form a necessary part of Nature Cure treatment?

A. The question betrays the correspondent’s ignorance. He has not taken the trouble to read carefully what I have written on the subject. Nature Cure implies that the treatment should be the cheapest and the simplest possible.¹ The ideal is that such treatment should be carried out in the villages. The villagers should be able to provide the necessary means and equipment. What cannot be had in the villages should be procured. Nature Cure does mean a change for the better in one’s outlook on life itself. It means regulation of one’s life in accordance with the laws of health. It is not a matter of taking the free medicine from the hospital or for fees. A man

¹ It is a common belief to-day that Nature Cure is expensive, more so than *Ayurvedic* or allopathic. If this is proved to be true, I shall have to admit failure. But I believe that the opposite is true and my experience also bears out the belief.—*Harijan*: February 10, 1946.

who takes free treatment from the hospital accepts charity. The man who accepts Nature Cure never begs. Self-help enhances self-respect. He takes steps to cure himself by eliminating poisons from the system and takes precautions against falling ill in the future.

The central feature of Nature Cure treatment is *Ramanama*. But it must come from the heart, if it is to be a remedy for all one's ailments.

Orange juice is not an essential part of Nature Cure treatment. Right diet and balanced diet are necessary. To-day, our villages are as bankrupt as we are ourselves. To produce enough vegetables, fruits and milk in the villages, is an essential part of the Nature Cure scheme. Time spent on this should not be considered a waste. It is bound to benefit all the villagers and ultimately the whole of India.

It is true that Nature Cure Homes of the right type should be opened in the villages and the cities. God willing, this will be done. The individual should rest content by doing his own duty, leaving the rest to God.

WHO IS RAMA ?

"I have accepted all the names and forms attributed to God as symbols connoting one formless, omnipresent *Rama*. To me, therefore, *Rama* described as the Lord of Sita, son of Dasharatha, is the all-powerful essence whose name inscribed in the heart removes all suffering—mental, moral and physical."

Q. You have often said that when you talk of '*Rama*', you refer to the Ruler of the Universe and not to *Rama*, the son of Dasharatha. But we find that your *Ramadhun* calls on '*Sita-Rama*' '*Raja Rama*' and it ends with '*Victory to Rama, the Lord of Sita.*' Who is this *Rama* if not the son of the King Dasharatha ?

A. I have answered such questions before. But there is something new in this one. It demands a reply. In *Ramadhun* '*Raja Rama*,' '*Sita-Rama*' are undoubtedly repeated. Is not this '*Rama*' the same as the son of Dasharatha ? Tulsidas has answered this question. But let me put down my own view. More potent than *Rama* is the Name. Hindu *charma* is like a boundless ocean teeming with priceless gems. The deeper you dive, the more treasures you find. In Hindu religion, God is known by various names. Thousands of people look doubtless upon *Rama* and Krishna as historical figures and literally believe that God came down in person on earth in the form of *Rama*, the son of Dasharatha, and by worshipping him one can attain salvation. The same thing holds good about Krishna. History, imagination and truth have got so inextricably mixed up. It is next to impossible to disentangle them. I have accepted all the names and forms attributed to God as symbols connoting one formless, omnipresent *Rama*. To me, therefore, *Rama* described as the Lord of Sita, son of Dasharatha, is the all-powerful essence whose name inscribed in the heart removes all suffering—mental, moral and physical.

DR. MEHTA'S INSTITUTION

"The tendency of looking to the West in order to make progress in whatever we do, should be checked. If we have to go to the West to learn Nature Cure, it cannot be of much use to India."

I have received several questions about Dr. Dinshah Mehta's institution. Two of them are worth noticing. They are given below:

"In order to make the institution more scientific, more modern and more useful for the public, is it not desirable that some capable enthusiastic Nature Cure man or men should be sent abroad for higher studies in Nature Cure? Would not such experts on their return evolve a system of Nature Cure suitable for our country and enable it to become popular and stand on its own feet?"

"You want a simple and cheap method of Nature Cure for our villages. Can the methods described by Kuhne, Just and Kneip etc., serve that purpose? Can these methods be useful and suitable for village work?"

The clinic at Poona could not serve the purpose of village Nature Cure in the opinion of the Trustees. Therefore, it was closed down and an experiment in village Nature Cure started at Uruli Kanchan. There the work is going on satisfactorily, though on a small scale. There is nothing there worth seeing as yet. Even the land has not been bought and no buildings have been built.

Now, let us take the main question. The tendency of looking to the West in order to make progress in whatever we do, should be checked. If we have to go to the West to learn Nature Cure, it cannot be of much use to India. Nature Cure is a thing which everyone can practise in the home. The advice of Nature Cure experts should not be necessary for all time. It is such a simple thing that everyone can learn it. If we have to go to

Europe to learn to recite *Ramanama*, it simply will not do. *Ramanama* is the very foundation of Nature Cure of my conception. Nor should it be necessary to go across the seas in order to learn the use of earth, water, ether, sun and air. This is self-evident. Whatever other knowledge is required in this direction can be had in our villages. For instance, if herbs are used, they must be village herbs. *Ayurveda* teachers know all about them. If some *Ayurvedic* physicians are scoundrels, they cannot become good men and servants of the people by going abroad. The knowledge of anatomy and physiology has come from the West. It is very useful and necessary for all physicians. But there are plenty of means of learning it in our own country. In short, whatever useful contribution to knowledge has been made by the West, it has reached everywhere and can be learnt everywhere. I might add here that the knowledge of anatomy and physiology is not essential for learning Nature Cure.

The writings of Kuhne, Just and Father Kneip, are simple, popular and useful for all. It is our duty to read them. Practically every Nature Cure physician knows something about them. Nature Cure has not been taken to the villages so far. We have not thought deeply and no one has thought of it in terms of the millions. This is just the beginning. No one can say where we shall stand in the end. As in all great and good enterprises, sacrifice and dedication are required to make this successful. Instead of looking up to the West, we should turn the searchlight inwards.

FAITH CURE V. RAMANAMA

“Faith Cure, if I know it correctly, is blind cure, such as the friend describes and thereby ridicules the living name of the living God. The latter is not a figment of one’s imagination. It has to come from the heart. It is conscious belief in God and a knowledge of His Law that makes perfect cure possible without any further aid.”

Here is fine banter from a friend :

“I have read your ‘Confession and Cure’¹ in *Harijan* of 17-3-’46. I wonder whether this Nature Cure has any close relation to what is being called Faith Cure. Of course, one should have faith in treatment. But there are some exclusive faith cures, for example, small-pox, stomach pain, etc. For small-pox, as you might know, especially in the South, no treatment is given but it is considered Divine Play. We do *poojas* to Goddess Mariamma and it is almost miraculous to see most of the cases come out successful. For stomach pain, even chronic cases, many make vows before the deity at Thirupathi; and finding themselves cured, fulfil their ablutions and other obligations. To give you a fitting example, my mother had the same pain and after her visit to Thirupathi, she is now free from that disease.

“Will you kindly enlighten me on this and may I ask why people should not have such faith in Nature Cure also and save the recurring expenditure to the doctors who, as Chaucer said, maintain a fine conspiracy with the apothecary to keep a patient always a patient, which is part of the natural order of things.”

The examples that have been quoted are neither Nature Cure, nor yet *Ramanama* which I have included

¹ In the article referred to, *Gandhiji* wrote:

“Nature Cure connotes a way of life which has to be learnt; it is not a drug cure as we understand it. The treatment to be efficacious can, therefore, only take place in or near a man’s cottage or house. It demands from its physician sympathy and patience and knowledge of human nature.”

in it. But they do show how Nature cures without any treatment in many cases. They are undoubtedly cases which show the part superstition plays in Indian life. *Ramanama*, which is the centre of Nature Cure, is the enemy of superstition. Unscrupulous men will abuse *Ramanama* as they will any other thing or system. Mere lip recitation of *Ramanama* has nothing to do with cure. Faith Cure, if I know it correctly, is blind cure, such as the friend describes and thereby ridicules the living name of the living God. The latter is not a figment of one's imagination. It has to come from the heart. It is conscious belief in God and a knowledge of His Law that make perfect cure possible without any further aid. That Law is that a perfect mind is responsible for perfect health of the body. A perfect mind comes from a perfect heart, not the heart known by a doctor's stethoscope, but the heart which is the seat of God. It is claimed that realization of God in the heart makes it impossible for an impure or an idle thought to cross the mind. Disease is impossible where there is purity of thought. Such a state may be difficult to attain. But the first step in the ascent to health is taken with its recognition. The next is taken when the corresponding attempt is made. This radical alteration in one's life is naturally accompanied by the observance of all other Nature's laws hitherto discovered by man. One cannot play with them and claim to have a pure heart. It can be said with justice that possession of a pure heart should do equally well without *Ramanama*. Only, I know no other way of attaining purity. And it is the way trodden by the sages of old all over the world. They were men of God, not superstitious men or charlatans.

If this is Christian Science, I have no quarrel with it. The way of *Ramanama* is not my discovery. It is probably much older than the Christian era.

A correspondent questions whether *Ramanama* avoids *bona fide* surgical operations. Of course, it does not. It cannot restore a leg that is cut off in an accident. In many cases surgical operations are unnecessary. Where

they are required, they should be performed. But a man of God will not worry if a limb is lost. Recitation of *Ramanama* is neither an empirical method nor a makeshift.

LAWS OF NATURE

“I have been expounding the rules of maintaining health as I know them. Spare and balanced diet may not be the same for everybody. It can be best worked out by the individual for himself through proper reading and careful thought.”

Q. I have been repeating *Ramanama* according to your advice and I am getting better. I must add that the medical treatment for tuberculosis is also being followed. You have said that eating little and eating the right food enables a man to be healthy and promotes longevity. I have observed the rule about eating sparsely for the last twentyfive years. Why should I have fallen a prey to tuberculosis? Would you say, I should attribute this ill luck to some evil deed in this life or in the previous one?

You say a man can live up to 125 years. Then, why should God have carried away Mahadevbhai, who was so useful to you? He observed the rule of eating moderately and having a balanced diet and he served you as his God. Why did he fall a prey to high blood-pressure? Why did Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who is looked upon as an incarnation of God, fall a prey to cancer, as deadly a disease as tuberculosis? Why was he not able to fight it successfully?

A. I have been expounding the rules of maintaining health as I know them. Spare and balanced diet may not be the same for everybody. It can be best worked out by the individual for himself through proper reading and careful thought. But that does not mean that the individual cannot make mistakes or that his or her knowledge is complete. That is why life has been called a laboratory. One should learn from the experience of others and go forward and, if he is not successful, he should not blame others or even himself. One should not be too ready to find fault with the rule, but if after careful thought, one comes to the conclusion that a certain rule is wrong, he should be able to tell the right one and declare it.

So far as your own case is concerned, there may be several causes leading to your illness. Who can say whether you have made the right use of the five 'powers'¹ in your own case? So long as I believe in the laws of Nature as I know them, I have to say that you must have erred somewhere. As for Mahadev and Ramakrishna Paramahansa, to feel that even they must have erred somehow is fitter than to say that the laws are wrong. These rules are not my creation. They are the laws of Nature according to experienced men. I believe in them and try to live up to my belief. Man is after all an imperfect creature. How can he know the whole truth? That the allopathic doctors do not believe in them or, if they do, they do so in a different sense, does not impress me. What I have said, does not and should not in any way, detract from the greatness of the individuals mentioned.

¹ Earth, water, ether, fire and wind.

NATURE CURE AND MODERN TREATMENT

“Personal hygiene and healthy living are of primary importance. And these should suffice. If everyone could achieve perfection in this art, there could be no disease. And, while obeying all the laws of Nature in order to cure illness, if it does come, the sovereign remedy ever lies in *Ramanama*.”

Q. Is there any room in your Nature Cure:

1. for instruments such as the microscope, X-rays and others for purposes of diagnosis?
2. for the use of medicines which have been proved to be 75 per cent successful in the treatment of specific diseases as, for example, quinine in malaria, emetin in dysentery, penicillin in pneumonia?
3. for instruction to people in the science of personal cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation, and the prevention of disease?

A. My Nature Cure is designed solely for villagers and villages. Therefore, there is no place in it for the microscope, X-rays and similar things. Nor is there room in Nature Cure for medicines, such as quinine, emetin and penicillin. Personal hygiene and healthy living are of primary importance. And these should suffice. If everyone could achieve perfection in this art, there could be no disease. And, while obeying all the laws of Nature in order to cure illness, if it does come, the sovereign remedy ever lies in *Ramanama*. But this cure through *Ramanama* cannot become universal in the twinkling of an eye. To carry conviction to the patient, the physician has to be a living embodiment of the power of *Ramanama*. Meantime, all that can possibly be had from the five agencies of Nature must be taken and used. They are earth, water, ether, fire and wind. This, to my mind, is the limit of Nature Cure. Therefore, my experiment in Uruli Kanchan consists in teaching the villagers, how to

live clean and healthy lives and in trying to cure the sick through the proper use of the five agencies. If necessary, curative herbs that grow locally, may be used. Wholesome and balanced diet is, of course, an indispensable part of Nature Cure.

CONFUSION ABOUT RAMANAMA

“Spiritual force is like any other force at the service of man. Apart from the fact that it has been used for physical ailments for ages, with more or less success, it would be intrinsically wrong not to use it if it can be successfully used for the cure of physical ailments.”

A friend writes:

“Regarding your suggested cure of malaria by *Ramanama*, my problem is that I do not understand how to rely on a spiritual force for my physical ailments. I am also not sure if I deserve to be cured and if am justified in praying for my salvation, when there is so much misery amongst my countrymen. The day I understand *Ramanama*, I shall pray for their salvation. Otherwise, I would feel more selfish than I do to-day.”

This is from a friend whom I believe to be an earnest seeker of truth. I take public notice of his difficulty, as it is typical of that of many like him.

Spiritual force is like any other force at the service of man. Apart from the fact that it has been used for physical ailments for ages, with more or less success, it would be intrinsically wrong not to use it, if it can be successfully used for the cure of physical ailments. For, man is both matter and spirit, each acting on and affecting the other. If you get rid of malaria by taking quinine, without thinking of the millions who do not get it, why should you refuse to use the remedy which is within you, because millions will not use it through their ignorance? May you not be clean and well because millions of others will not be so, ignorantly or, may be, even cussedly? If you will not be clean out of false notions of philanthropy, you will deny yourself the duty of serving the very millions by remaining dirty and ill. Surely, refusal to be spiritually well or clean is worse than the refusal to be physically clean and well.

Salvation is nothing more and nothing less than being well in every way. Why should you deny it for yourself, if thereby you show the way to others and beyond showing it, actually serve them in addition by reason of your fitness? But you are wholly selfish, when you take penicillin in order to get well, although you have the certain knowledge that the others cannot get it.

The confusion lying behind my correspondent's argument is obvious.

What, however, is true is that the taking of a pill or pills of quinine is much easier than gaining the knowledge of the use of *Ramanama*. It involves much effort as against the mere cost of buying quinine pills. The effort is worth making for the sake of the millions, in whose name and on whose behalf my correspondent will shut *Rama* out of his heart.

A HARD CASE

“*Ramanama* can never fail. The failure only means a lack in us. We must seek the cause of failure within us.”

On our return to Sevagram *Asbrama* after a few months' absence, one of the workers was found to have got mentally deranged. He was in that state when he first came. This was the second attack. He became uncontrollable and a decision had to be taken. The Civil Surgeon of Wardha was consulted. He said he could not keep him in the Civil Hospital, but would look after him in the Jail Hospital. So, in his own interest as well as in the interest of the Settlement, he had to be sent to confinement. For Gandhiji it was like drawing out a live tooth, but there was no escape. He put his dilemma before the *Asbrama* people. “He is a fine worker. After his recovery last year, he looked after the garden and kept the hospital accounts. He worked diligently and was happy in his work. Then, he got malaria and was given a quinine injection because injection works quicker. He says the injection has gone to his head and is responsible for his mental affection. While I was working in my room this morning, I found him wandering to and fro outside, shouting and gesticulating. I went out to him and walked with him. He was quieted. But the moment I left him, he became uncontrollable again. He gets violent, too, and listens to no one. So, he had to be sent to jail.

“It has naturally hurt me to think that one of our workers should be sent to jail. I may be asked: ‘What about your *Ramanama* which you have claimed to be a cure-all?’ Even in the face of this failure, let me reiterate that my faith remains intact. *Ramanama* can never fail. The failure only means a lack in us. We must seek the cause of failure within us.”

—Pyarelal

RĀMA—THE SON OF DASHARATHA

“*Rama* cannot become omnipresent for the man who regards him merely as the son of Dasharatha. But for the believer in *Rama* as God, the father of the omnipresent *Rama* also becomes omnipresent—the father and son become one.”

An Arya Samajist writes:

“How can the *Rama* whom you believe to be immortal, be *Rama*, the son of Dasharatha and the husband of Sita? I often attend your prayer gathering with this dilemma always confronting me and because of it, I am unable to join in the *Ramadhun*. This hurts me, for you are right when you say that all should take part in it. Cannot you make the *Ramadhun* such that all can join in the recital?”

I have already explained what I mean by all. It applies to all those who can join in it from the heart and recite it in tune. The others should remain silent. But this is a small matter. The important question is as to how *Rama*, the son of Dasharatha, can be deemed immortal. This question was raised by Saint Tulsidas himself and answered by him. The answer cannot in reality be reasoned out. It does not lend itself to intellectual satisfaction. It is a matter of heart speaking to heart. I worshipped *Rama* as Sita's husband in the first instance, but as my knowledge and experience of Him grew, my *Rama* became immortal and omnipresent. This does not mean that *Rama* ceased to be Sita's husband; but the meaning of Sita's husband expanded with the vision of *Rama*. This is how the world evolves. *Rama* cannot become omnipresent for the man who regards him merely as the son of Dasharatha. But for the believer in *Rama* as God, the father of the omnipresent *Rama* also becomes omnipresent—the father and son become one. It may be said that this is all a matter of imagination. “To each

man according to his faith," is all that I can say. If all religions are one at source, we have to synthesize them. To-day, they are looked upon as separate and that is why we kill each other. When we are tired of religion, we become atheists and then, apart from the little self, nothing, not even God, exists. But when we acquire true understanding, the little self perishes and God becomes all in all. *Rama*, then, is and is not the son of Dasharatha, the husband of Sita, the brother of Bharata and Lakshmana and yet is God, the unborn and eternal. All honour, then, to those who not believing in *Rama* as the son of Dasharatha still come to join in the collective prayers. This matter of *Rama* is one which transcends reason. I have merely tried to give to the reader my belief for what it is worth.

RAMANAMA AND CHARMS

"I can say fearlessly that there is no connection between *Ramanama* of my conception and *jantar mantar*. I have said that to take *Ramanama* from the heart means deriving help from an incomparable power. The atom bomb is as nothing compared with it. This power is capable of removing all pain."

Q. My nephew was ill. His relations did not resort to medicines but to spells and charms for his cure. It cannot be said that these did any good. Your mother, too, must have indulged in these things. Now you talk of *Ramanama*. Is it not the same as spells and charms?

A. I have, in one form or another, answered this question before now. But it is as well to do so again. My mother gave me medicines so far as I remember. But she did believe in spells and charms. Learned friends have faith in them. I have not. And because I have no belief in such things, I can say fearlessly that there is no connection between *Ramanama* of my conception and *jantar mantar*. I have said that to take *Ramanama* from the heart means deriving help from an incomparable power. The atom bomb is as nothing compared with it. This power is capable of removing all pain. It must, however, be admitted that it is easy to say that *Ramanama* must come from the heart, but to attain the reality is very difficult. Nevertheless, it is the biggest thing man can possess.

FROM AFTER-PRAYER DISCOURSES

“*Ramanama*, when it is uttered not merely by the lips, but proceeds from the heart, is the sovereign remedy for the triple woe to which a man is subject. Reason follows the heart. It does not guide it. A pure heart is thus the most essential requisite not only for the mental health, but for physical, too; and that could be had only through waiting on God—repeating *Ramanama*.”

RAMANAMA—ITS LAWS AND ITS DISCIPLINE

The place of Nature Cure in the Indian rural economy was stressed by Gandhiji in the course of a brief speech at the conclusion of his prayers this evening. He said he was leaving Bombay the next day. Therefore, he wanted to give them a parting message. He wanted to tell them about Nature Cure. He had written about that subject, but had not done much work. Nature Cure was not like a doctor giving medicine in a bottle. It was really the natural way of keeping health and happiness. They might be surprised to hear him say so. All the same, he would assert that *Ramanama* was an item in Nature Cure. He had friends in every system of medicine. Ganesh Shastri Joshi, an *Ayurvedic* physician, had told him that *Ayurveda* supported the idea that *Ramanama* acted like a tonic. *Ramanama* was for self-purification, for achieving spiritual strength.

For a long time, he had been preaching that if all the Indians learnt the doctrine of *satyagraha*, they would get freedom. He was so convinced of it that if the whole world opposed him, he would still assert it. He was equally convinced that *Ramanama* could help a man in ill-health, but it had its laws and its discipline. No one could gourmandize, say “*Rama-Rama*” and blame Gandhi if he got stomach-ache. *Ramanama* had its proper uses.

No man could utter *Ramanama*, indulge in looting and hope to attain salvation. It was only for those who were prepared to observe proper discipline for the sake of self-purification.

Gandhiji explained that he had been practising Nature Cure even from the days when he was a barrister. But the realization had come to him late in life that he could use it for work in the villages, for the service of the hungry millions.

—Bombay: March 15, 1946.

MOST EFFECTIVE REMEDY

Addressing the prayer meeting at Uruli Kanchan, Gandhiji said that *Ramadhun* was the most effective remedy for physical and mental ailments, and that no doctor or *vaidya* could promise cure by medicine. "But," he added, "God will certainly relieve you of your pains and worries if you pray to Him." But for the prayer to be effective, one must participate in *Ramadhun* wholeheartedly and then only one would feel peace and happiness.

There were other conditions also which one had to fulfil. One must take proper food, have sufficient sleep and not give vent to one's anger. Above all, one must live in harmony with Nature and follow its principles.

Gandhiji further said that he had come to Uruli because he had felt that if he was to serve the poor through Nature Cure, he must go to their cottages in villages. He had been practising Nature Cure for the last 50 years, but that was for the benefit of himself and a few friends. Until this time he had not felt the urge to extend his activities, and now in the evening of his life he had taken the work of propagating Nature Cure to the poor. He believed that the poor would be benefited by Nature Cure as also the rich.

—Poona: March 22, 1946.

RAMA, ALLAH AND GOD

Explaining his conception of *Rama*, Gandhiji said that the *Rama* to whom his prayers were addressed was not the *Rama* described in History as the son of Dasharatha. He emphasized that *Rama*, *Allah* and God were the same. The word *Rama* attracted millions of Hindus and *Allah* attracted the Muslims. He invited the people belonging to all faiths to join his prayers.

—*New Delhi*: April 3, 1946.

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PANACEA FOR ALL AILMENTS

Speaking after prayers, Gandhiji referred to his latest love—Nature Cure. He had believed in it for years. He felt that what he had shared with his friends and close associates so far, should be shared with the masses, poor villagers. He had been thinking of the villagers in particular in connection with the Kasturba Memorial work.

Medical help had become an elaborate and costly affair nowadays. Those who could afford it, called in a doctor who wrote out a prescription in a language unintelligible to the layman. The latter carried the prescription to the chemist, took the medicine and counted upon it to cure him. Apart from the futility of this method of treatment, it was beyond the reach of the masses.

During the recent tour of Bengal and Madras, lots of people had joined the prayers and in the mass singing of *Ramadhun*. He had since introduced *Ramanama* in Nature Cure as a panacea for all ailments, whether physical, mental or spiritual.

Physical ailments, Gandhiji continued, were not always the most serious. Those born of anger, lust, greed, infatuation etc., were worse. "Bad as is the loss of a limb, the loss of reason would be worse. *Ramanama*, when it is uttered not merely by the lips, but proceeds from the heart,

is the sovereign remedy for the triple woe to which a man is subject. Reason follows the heart. It does not guide it. A pure heart is thus the most essential requisite not only for the mental health, but for physical, too; and that could be had only through waiting on God—repeating *Ramanama*.”

No remedy on earth, Gandhiji proceeded, could cure all physical ailments. But *Ramanama* enabled one to put up with suffering bravely and calmly when it could not cure. *Ramanama* also stood for the natural and right way of living. That was why he had taken to Nature Cure in the evening of his life and thereby added another to his numerous burdens.

—*New Delhi*: April 19, 1946.

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NEVER-FAILING REMEDY

Addressing the gathering after prayers, Gandhiji emphasized the fact that *Ramanama* recited from the heart was the never-failing remedy for all the ills—physical, mental or spiritual. He watched them taking part in the *Ramadhun*; but whether they did it from the heart, God alone knew. They themselves might know. But self-deception was quite possible. It was so very easy. One thing was clear. If a man or a woman who claimed to recite *Ramanama* from the heart was always ailing or was given to outbursts of anger, the claim was eventually unproved.

Tolstoy had said that if man dismissed God from his heart even for a single moment, Satan occupied the vacancy. *Ramanama* would expel Satan. Honest men and women had said to him that with all their efforts they could not say that *Ramanama* came to them from the heart. His reply to them was that they must go on and have infinite patience. A boy required at least 16 years' hard study in order to become a doctor. How much more time must

be necessary to establish *Ramanama* in the heart.

While he was endeavouring to enthrone God in the heart, and he believed in Nature's way, he would confine himself to the five elements as curative means. He would give first place to pure air. It was the prime necessity. That implied that their houses and social surroundings should be perfectly clean. They must not live in air-tight boxes, miscalled houses. They should live as free practically as they were on the prayer ground.

—*New Delhi*: April 20, 1946.

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WATER IN NATURE CURE

Gandhiji had noticed that several men and women did not take part in beating time with *Ramadhun*. He pulled them up in his after-prayer discourse to-day. There was nothing to be ashamed of in repeating the name of God and in beating time with it. Modesty was an admirable virtue; but, out of place, it became a fault.

Reverting to the subject of the previous evening *i.e.*, Nature Cure, Gandhiji spoke about pure water, the second in importance among the five natural elements, the first one being air about which he had spoken the previous evening. Large numbers of men and women in this country drank impure water and washed their clothes with and bathed in water which made the body and the clothes dirtier than before. "Will any of you care to bathe or wash your clothes in the gutter water?" he asked. "Yet many of the small tanks, where people bathe and wash and even drink from, are no cleaner than the gutter. Nature is lenient. It often does not punish us for our sins immediately. Thus, we can go on breathing impure air and drinking impure water over long periods without any dramatic ill-effects. But there is not the slightest doubt that such a thing lowers the vitality and makes one fall an easy prey to disease.

Gandhiji told the audience what he had seen on the banks of the sacred Ganges at Hardwar. People went there to wash off their sins, but they made the place so dirty that it could not even wash their bodies clean. He used to find it difficult to bathe at *Har-ki-Pauri*, if he was at all late. People evacuated on the banks and did not even care to cover it up with sand. They made the bathing *ghat* filthy, strewing flowers which were trampled under the feet and so on. It was a painful state of affairs, a thing of which Indians had real cause to be ashamed.

He had taken up the new job of advising people on Nature Cure. A doctor had to go through five years of hard studies before he could begin to treat patients. Not so the Nature Cure man. Speaking about himself, he said he had picked up the essentials of Nature Cure by reading a few books and talking to experts in the line. Experience and experimentation had made up the rest. They could all do the same and become their own doctors. People had a notion that what was simple was no good. A spinning wheel was simple. It was, therefore, condemned as primitive and crude. A mill cost a lot and was elaborate. It was an indication of progress. If this was their view, he was afraid they would have no use for him as he was but a simple-minded villager and a believer in the philosophy of simplicity. But he knew that most of them were simple-minded men and women like him and though they lived in a city, they had not lost all contact with the villages. Therefore, he felt emboldened to place Nature Cure before them.

Pure air and pure water were the first essentials, and, of course, *Ramanama* was there all the time. A man who repeated *Ramanama* and thereby cleansed his inner being could not tolerate the filth outside. If millions took to *Ramanama* in real earnest, there would be no riots, which were a social malady, and there would be no illness. The Kingdom of Heaven would come on earth.

—*New Delhi*: April 21, 1946.

DON'T SOIL GOD'S CREATION

Reverting to the question of Nature Cure at the end of his evening prayer, Gandhiji said that he had talked to them about air and water. To-day he wanted to talk about earth, the earth which the human body is made of and to which it must return. "Whether the dead are buried or cremated, dust returns to dust. Like air and water, earth is God's creation and we must not soil it." People were in the habit of spitting anywhere, throwing orange skins and bits of paper here and there. All that was sin. To put anything out of place was equivalent to soiling the earth. A man of prayer could never do that. "Death might claim us at any moment. Let us, then, be on the alert and recite *Ramanama* all the time. We must cleanse if we can, never soil His creation."

—*New Delhi*: April 23, 1946.

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CURATIVE USES OF EARTH

Speaking after the evening prayers Gandhiji reverted to the place of earth in Nature Cure. One of the curative uses of earth was an earth bath. Dry, finely powdered earth rubbed on the body cleansed the skin. Mud applied on the body and allowed to dry could cure many skin diseases. More than 40 years ago a little boy had boils all over the body. They were slow to respond to any treatment. Finally, he took the case in his hand and covered the boy's body with mud and made him run about naked. The boy was cured in eight to ten days.

"We are born of earth and return to earth after the life's journey." He continued "We cannot live in the air. In the morning prayers there is a *sloka* in which the devotee invokes Mother Earth and asks for her forgiveness for treading upon her. If we expect our prayer to be heard, we must show our reverence in practice. We must not soil the earth or dirty the surroundings as many

of us do to-day. If somebody soils the earth through ignorance or oversight by spitting or making nuisances, we should cover up the filth with dry earth.”

—*New Delhi*, April 24, 1946.

ETHER IN NATURE CURE

Speaking after the evening prayers, Gandhiji reverted to the theme of Nature Cure and talked about ether or void. Man was made of clay, but even clay was prevaded by ether. The cavities in the human body, the pores in human skins were all occupied by ether or void. The stars, the sun and the moon were suspended in the void. The astronomers said there were many a heavenly body, like the sun and the stars, which the human eye could not see. Gandhiji wanted them to stretch their mental vision so as to grasp the infinity of ethereal space. Ether was the most intangible thing known to man, but it was occupied by something still more intangible, namely, God.

In Nature Cure, they had to establish contact with the ether as with the earth. They could sleep under the sky and have as much empty space around them as possible. If they attuned themselves to ether, they would realize what insignificant little creatures they were and how ill-becoming it was for them to quarrel amongst themselves.

Gandhiji referred to his visit to *Bhangi* quarters that morning. He lived on the outskirts of those quarters. But his place was clean and airy, where he could live all his life. The *Bhangi* quarters were dirty and filthy. Their rooms were dark and ill-ventilated. There was just one little ventilator in the room, so that he felt suffocated as he entered it. It was a shame that their brethren should live in that state. Gandhiji told the gathering to visit *Bhangi* quarters. The Harijans had a right to feel that his claim to be one of them was more than mere idle talk.

“We are all made of earth, ether and the rest of the five elements. God makes no distinction between man

and man. By ourselves, we are insignificant worms. We become great when we reflect His greatness. If we are attuned to Him, illness won't touch us. And if, perchance, we do fall ill, we shall be content to seek cure only through His grace by the application of the simplest means provided by Nature and not run about hither and thither to find ways and means to prolong our lives," observed Gandhiji in conclusion.

—*New Delhi*: April 27, 1946.

NATURE CURE TECHNIQUE

Addressing a prayer meeting to-day, Gandhiji explained at some length the technique of Nature Cure.

The human body was made up of five elements. Sometimes the balance between them was disturbed and disease resulted, for which they were themselves responsible. For, there was no dearth of any of these elements in Nature. Those five elements were earth, water, air, ether and fire. He had already talked to them about earth, water, air and ether. Just as they could not do without them, similarly they could not live, even for an instant, without fire-warmth. The sun is the source of all warmth and life.

They should not run away from the sun. Most parents 'protected' their children against it, lest they get tanned. The distinction between dark and white appeared very irrational to him. The Negroes were all dark. Their skin had the blackness of ebony. But it had also its smoothness and lustre. He had lived with the Negroes for many years. It had not struck him that they were not beautiful. They should not be afraid, therefore, of the sun. They should not fight shy of the black skin, but of a black heart.

Those who were afraid of light became lustreless, physically as well as spiritually.

Mothers often complained of their children becoming

pale and rickety. The remedy for this was sun-baths. The best time for it was the morning when the sun just appeared above the horizon. The children should be made to gaze at it, too. He recommended *Surya-Namaskar* in that connection. It had a special technique and might do more harm than good if wrongly performed. He, however, could not explain it to them just then.

They should all live in close contact with the sun and air to the accompaniment of *Ramandhun*, of course. No illness could then touch them.

—*New Delhi*, April 30, 1946.

THE ELIXIR OF HEALING

In his after-prayer discourse, Gandhiji again dwelt on the subject of Nature Cure or the cure of ailments spiritual, mental and physical, by the application principally of *Ramanama*. A correspondent had written to him, pointing out how some people superstitiously wrote *Ramanama* on their clothes so as to wear it 'next to the heart !' Others wrote *Ramanama* millions of times minutely on a piece of paper which they afterwards cut up into small bits and swallowed so that they could claim that *Ramanama* had entered into them ! Another correspondent had asked him whether he had prescribed *Ramanama* as the sovereign remedy for all ills because *Rama* was God's anointed and was a descendant of Dasharatha, the illustrious King of Ayodhya. There were people who thought that he was self-deluded and was trying to delude others by adding one more to the thousands of superstitions which filled this superstition-ridden land. He had no answer to such criticism. He only said to himself, what did it matter if truth was abused and fraud practised in its name by others ? So long as he was sure of his truth, he could not help proclaiming it for fear of its being misunderstood or abused. "Nobody in this world possesses absolute truth. This is God's attribute alone. Relative truth is all

we know. Therefore, we can only follow the truth as we see it. Such pursuit of truth cannot lead anyone astray."

He reiterated that *Rama*, whose name he prescribed as the infallible remedy for all ills, was neither the historical *Rama* nor the *Rama* of those who used the name as a charm or black magic. *Rama* whose name he prescribed as a cure-all was God, by taking whose name devotees attained purity and peace, and he claimed that it was the one infallible remedy for all ailments whether mental, spiritual or physical. It was, of course, possible to cure physical ailments by going to doctors and *vaidyas*. But *Ramanama* enabled one to become one's own doctor or *vaidya* and to find the elixir of healing within oneself. Even when the ailment could not be cured, because physically it was incurable, it enabled one to endure it with equanimity and peace of mind. "A person who has faith in *Ramanama* would not run from pillar to post and dance attendance at the doors of celebrated doctors and *vaidyas* in order to prolong existence anyhow. Nor is *Ramanama* meant to be taken only when the doctors and *vaidyas* have failed. It is meant to enable one to do without them altogether. For a believer in *Ramanama*, it is the first as well as the last remedy."

—*New Delhi*: May 24, 1946.

HOW TO RECITE RAMANAMA

Continuing the theme, Gandhiji in to-day's discourse explained the conditions under which alone *Ramanama* could become an effective remedy for the three-fold malady—physical, mental and spiritual—to which man was subject. The first condition was that it should come from the heart. What did that mean? People did not mind going to the ends of the earth to find a cure for their physical ailments, which were much less important than the mental or spiritual. "Man's physical being is after all perishable. It cannot, by its very nature, last for ever. And yet men make a fetish of it while neglecting the

immortal spirit within.” A man who believed in *Ramanama* would not make a fetish of the body, but would regard it only as a means of serving God. And for making it into a fit instrument for that purpose, *Ramanama* was the sovereign means.

To install *Ramanama* in the heart required infinite patience. It might even take ages. But the effort was worthwhile. Even so, success depended solely on the grace of God.

Ramanama could not come from the heart unless one had cultivated the virtues of truth, honesty and purity within and without. Every day at the evening prayers, they repeated the *slokas* describing the man with a steadfast intellect. Every one of them, said Gandhiji, could become a *sthita prajna*—man with steadfast intellect—if he kept his senses under discipline, ate and drank and allowed himself enjoyment and recreation only to sustain life for service. If one had no control over one’s thoughts, if one did not mind, for instance, sleeping in a hole of a room with all doors and windows shut, and breathing foul air or drinking dirty water, his recitation of *Ramanama* was in vain.

That, however, did not mean that one should give up reciting *Ramanama* on the ground that one had not the requisite purity. For, recitation of *Ramanama* was also a means for acquiring purity. “In the case of a man who repeats *Ramanama* from the heart, discipline and self-control will come easy. Observance of the rules of health and hygiene will become his second nature. His life will run an even course. He will never want to hurt anyone. To suffer in order to relieve other’s suffering will become a part of his being and fill him with an ineffable and perennial joy.” Let them, therefore, said Gandhiji, persevere and ceaselessly repeat *Ramanama* during all their waking hours. Ultimately, it would remain with them even during their sleep and God’s grace would then fill them with perfect health of body, mind and spirit.

—New Delhi: May 25, 1946.

POTENCY OF SILENT THOUGHT

In his discourse after the prayer to-day, Gandhiji informed the gathering that he would be going to Mussoorie under medical advice for some days. They had been coming to the prayer gathering daily in order to join him in chanting *Ramanama* or rather in learning how to do so. *Ramanama*, however, could not be taught by word of mouth. But he held that even more potent than the spoken word was the silent thought. A single right thought could envelop the world. It was never wasted. The very attempt to clothe thought in word or action limited it. No man in this world could express a thought in word or action fully.

"That does not mean," proceeded Gandhiji, "that one should go into perpetual silence." In theory, that was possible. But it was very difficult to fulfil the condition by which silent thought could be made effective. He for one could not claim to have attained the requisite intensity or control over thought. He could not altogether keep out useless or irrelevant thoughts from his mind. It required infinite patience and *tapasya* to attain that state.

He was not indulging in a figure of speech, but he meant it literally when he told them on the previous day that there was no limit to the potency of *Ramanama*. But in order to experience that, *Ramanama* had to come from a heart that was absolutely pure. He himself was striving to attain that state. He had envisaged it in the mind, but had not fully realized it in practice. When that stage was reached, even the recitation of *Ramanama* would become unnecessary.¹

He hoped they would continue to recite *Ramanama* in their homes severally and in company during his absence.

¹ I do look forward to a time when even repeating the name of *Rama* will become a hindrance. When I have realized that *Rama* transcends even speech, I shall have no need to repeat the name.

—*Young India*: August 14, 1924.

The secret of collective prayers was that the emanation of silent influence from one another would help them in the realization of their goal.

—*New Delhi*: May 26, 1946.

NOT FOR PLEASURE

At the end of his first public utterance at the prayer gathering to-day, Gandhiji said: "I long for the day when *Ramanama* would save me from the necessity of having to go to hill stations during the summer. Crores cannot go to the hill stations. They are born to live and die on the plains.

"I have not come here for pleasure, but only under medical necessity so that I might be able to serve you the more. Give me your blessings and let me have a little quiet so that I can attend to my work and commune with the Maker undisturbed."

—*Mussoorie*: May 29, 1946.

NO CHARM LIKE RAMANAMA

Speaking at the prayer meeting to-day, Gandhiji gave the healing message of *Ramanama* and said: "*Ramanama* is not for the few: it is for all. He who takes this name lays by a rich store for himself, and it is inexhaustible. The more you draw upon it, the more it increases. It is infinite. As the *Upanishad* says, you take out infinite out of infinite and infinite remains behind. It is the unfailing panacea for all the ills, physical, mental and spiritual to which man is subject. *Ramanama* is only one of the numerous names of God. In fact, there are as many names of God as there are human beings in the world. You may substitute *Krishna* for *Rama* or you can substitute for it any of His countless names and it will make no difference."¹

¹ Truth is *Rama*, *Narayana*, *Ishwara*, *Khuda*, *Allah*, God. As

He himself had got the *mantra* of *Ramanama*, he said, from his nurse when he was a child. "I used to be frightened of ghosts and evil spirits in the dark. My nurse told me: 'If you repeat *Ramanama*, all the ghosts and evil spirits will vanish.' I accepted her advice with all the unquestioning faith of a child. That cured me of my cowardice." If that was the experience of a child, how much more would the grown-ups stand to gain by it if they repeated *Ramanama* with understanding and faith, he asked.

But the condition was that it must come from the heart. "Do evil thoughts possess you or, are you tormented by lust or greed? Then, there is no charm against it like *Ramanama*." And he illustrated his meaning by a parable. "Supposing you are tempted to amass a big fortune by some easy and dishonest means. If you have faith in *Ramanama*, you will say to yourself: 'Why should I amass for my wife and children riches which they might squander away—why not leave them a legacy in the shape of sound character and sound education and training that will enable them to earn their living by honest industry and body labour?' Ceaseless repetition of *Ramanama* will dispel your delusion and false attachment and the living realization will dawn on you that you were a fool to hanker after millions for the sake of your dear ones, instead of offering them the priceless treasure of His name which frees one from all bondage and wandering. Filled with the joy of that realization, such a person will tell his wife and children: 'I have not brought for you the treasure I had set out for, but something infinitely richer.' 'Where is it, show it to us?' they will say incredulously. 'It is the Name which is richer than all treasures', he will reply, 'because It quenches the thirst for all riches. It is enshrined in my heart.'

—Mussoorie: June 2, 1946.

Narasimha says: 'The different shapes into which gold is beaten gives rise to different names and forms; but ultimately it is all gold'—*Young India*: August 14, 1924.

ESSENCE OF ALL PRAYERS

In his speech after the evening prayers, Gandhiji referred to the '*dharmashala*' that was proposed to be erected for the poor at his instance and said that they would have to be ever watchful so that it served the purpose for which it was built. Otherwise, he would feel sorry for the money wasted. They had attended the prayers for several days. If they had really come to bear *Ramanama* in their hearts, they would certainly do what he had asked in the name of *Rama* and His creation. He also expected them to offer prayers in their own homes regularly morning and evening. There was no need for them to learn Sanskrit *slokas*, if they did not wish to. *Ramadhun* was enough. The essence of all prayers was to establish God in their hearts. If they succeeded in doing that, all would be well with them, with the society and the world.

—*Mussoorie*: June 8, 1946.

SHEER HYPOCRISY

To repeat *Ramanama* and to follow the way of Ravana in actual practice was worse than useless. It was sheer hypocrisy. One might deceive oneself or the world, but one could not deceive the Almighty.

—*New Delhi*: June 13, 1946.

AMBROSIA OF GOD'S NAME

Commenting upon Mira Bai's song which was sung at the prayer, Gandhiji said that in that song the devotee asks the soul to drink deep of the nectar of God's name. Physical food and drink result in satiety, and, if over indulged, in illness. But the ambrosia of God's name knows no such limit. The deeper one drinks of it, the more the thirst for it grows, but it must sink deep into

the heart. When that happens, all delusion and attachment, lust and envy, fall off from us. Only one must persevere and have patience. Success is the inevitable result of such effort.

—*New Delhi*: June 18, 1946.

MIRACLES THAT FAITH WORKS

A man of prayer must know no disappointment because he knows that the times are in His hands who is the Arch Planner and does everything in His good time. A man of prayer, therefore, waits in faith and patience always.

Making the theme of his after-prayer discourse the song that had been sung at the prayer, Gandhiji explained how that song gave the allegorical story of the struggle between the elephant king (*Gajendra*) and the *Graba* (the alligator). It was taken from the classical episode of *Gajendra Moksha* from the *Bhagwat*. The original was a piece of rare poetical merit, combining as it did the melodious music of verse with loftiness of the sentiment which it embodied. That was the test of all great piece of art. It must combine beauty with use. Cattle might be satisfied with filling their bellies with fodder. But man liked his food to please the eye as well as provide nourishment.

In the allegory of *Gajendra and Graba*, Gandhiji went on to explain, the elephant king was seized unawares by the crocodile as he went to have a drink of water in the river and was dragged down. The more he struggled, the deeper he sank. A stage was, however, reached when despairing of his physical prowess, he threw himself on God's grace entirely and invoked His aid, and the Lord of Dwarka came in the twinkling of an eye and rescued him.

"The moral of the story", said Gandhiji, "is that God never fails His devotees in the hour of trial. The condition is that there must be a living faith and the uttermost

reliance on Him. The test of faith is that having done our duty we must be prepared to welcome whatever He may send—joy as well as sorrow, good luck as well as bad luck. He will be like King Janaka who, when informed that his capital was ablaze, only remarked that it was no concern of his.”

The secret of his resignation and equanimity, remarked Gandhiji, was that he was ever awake, never remiss in the performance of his duty. Having done his duty, he would leave the rest to God.

“And so a man of prayer will in the first place be spared mishaps by the ever merciful Providence, but if the mishaps do come, he will not bewail his fate nor lay the blame on God, but bear them with an undisturbed peace of mind and joyous resignation to His will.”

—*New Delhi*: June 20, 1946.

PLEA FOR FAITH IN GOD

Speaking to the prayer gathering this evening, Gandhiji told them it was wonderful how he had been able to maintain his health in spite of the extremely heavy work in the broiling heat of Delhi. He attributed it to the miraculous power of *Ramanama*.

Again, it was through the grace of God that he was with them that day. An accident had taken place in the middle of the night, while he was fast asleep. Some persons had placed a boulder on the rail between Karjat and Neral, and but for the presence of mind of the engine driver, the train would have been derailed; and no one could say who would have survived to tell the tale. But no one could kill unless God willed it.

He had done no harm to anyone. Why anyone should attempt to kill him, he did not know. But there it was. Such things happened in every country. Why not in India, too? It was the seventh time that he had had a narrow escape. Perhaps, it was meant that he should live

upto 125 years in order to serve them. As a matter of fact, the whole of one's life was a struggle for life against that. He did not wish to add anything to that except to say that they should have faith in God. He could make crooked straight.

—Poona: June 30, 1946.

SIGNIFICANCE OF RAMANAMA

Explaining the significance of *Ramanama* to the prayer gathering this evening, Gandhiji said: "God is not a person. He is the all-pervading, all-powerful spirit. Anyone who bears Him in his or her heart has accession of a marvellous force or energy as objective in its results as, say electricity, but much subtler."

Was he propagating a species of superstition? he asked. "No," was his reply. Mere repetition of *Ramanama* possessed no mysterious virtue as such. *Ramanama* was not like black magic. It had to be taken with all that it symbolized. Rather, it was like a mathematical formula which summed up in brief the result of endless research. Mere mechanical repetition of *Ramanama* could not give strength. For that, one had to understand and live up to the conditions attaching to its recitation. To take God's name, one had to live a godly life.

—Poona: July 2, 1946.

INNER AND OUTER CLEANLINESS

In the course of his discourse to the prayer gathering to-day, Gandhiji referred, among other things, to the filthy surroundings in which the *Harijan* quarters were located and in which he had taken his abode. He had been wondering why those in charge of sanitation, that is the Municipality and the P. W. D., should put up with that filth. What was the use of his going and staying there,

if it could not induce them to make the place healthy and hygienic?

What was the connection between all that and the prayer? A man who did not observe the rules of external cleanliness could not pray for internal cleanliness. If the object of their attending prayer was idle curiosity, they had committed a sin by coming. If they had come to join in the prayer, they must pray for inner and outer cleanliness. To say one thing and to do something different would be deception. No one could deceive God, because He was omnipresent and omniscient.

He was embarrassed by the care and attention that was being lavished on him by those who were in charge of the management of the camp. Yet, he was finding his stay very taxing. There was so much dirt and filth about the place. Dr. Dinshah had told him that the lavatories were so dirty that he could not use them. There were so many flies about the place that he was anxious that he (Gandhiji) might catch some infection and get killed. He himself was not worried about that. Although the two doctors with him looked after him, he did not depend on any one except God. The Almighty would take care of his health. But his companions did not have that faith in God.

—*Bombay*: July 6, 1946.

A THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“The elixir of *Ramanama* imparts joy to the soul and rids the body of its ailment.”

[The following are taken from Gandhiji's "A Thought For The Day" diary which is not yet published. As these thoughts are most appropriate to the subject matter of this book, the editor could not resist the temptation of sharing them with the reader. For the same reason two personal letters from Gandhiji have also been included. The originals are all in Hindi.—THE EDITOR.]

To fall ill should be a matter of shame for anyone. Illness implies some error or other. He whose body and mind are perfectly sound, should never suffer from illness.

—*Sevagram*: Dec. 26, 1944.

An evil thought is also an indication of illness. Therefore, we should guard ourselves against evil thoughts.

—*Sevagram*: Dec. 27, 1944.

An infallible remedy for evil thoughts is *Ramanama*. The name should proceed not merely from the lips, but from the heart.

—*Sevagram*: Dec. 28, 1944.

Diseases are numerous, so also are the physicians and their treatments. If we regard all disease as one and consider *Rama* as the one and only physician, we are freed from most of our troubles.

—*Sevagram*: Dec. 29, 1944.

How strange that we should be running after *vaidyas*

and doctors who themselves die, but quietly forget *Rama* who is eternal and is an unfailing *vaidya* !

—*Sevagram*: Dec. 30, 1944.

But more strange than this is the fact that though we know that we too have to die one day, and that as a result of doctors' treatment we can at best prolong our existence by a few days more, we put ourselves to no end of trouble.

—*Sevagram*: Dec. 31, 1944.

The young and the old, the rich and the poor—all die before our very eyes; still we will not sit at rest but do all that we can, except relying on *Rama*, just to live a few days longer.

—*Sevagram*: Jan. 1, 1945.

What a fine thing would it be if we understood this and placing our reliance on *Rama* patiently put up with whatever ailment came our way and lived in real peace !

—*Sevagram*: Jan. 2, 1945.

If a man regarded as religious is suffering from illness, it means that something or other is lacking in him.

—*Sevagram*: Apr. 22, 1945.

If a man's mind remains impure in spite of himself, *Ramanama* should be his sole support.

—On Nearing *Madras*: Jan. 21, 1946.

The more I think the more I realize that *Ramanama* recited from heart and with knowledge is a cure-all for every kind of disease.

—*Uruli*: March 22, 1946.

Attachment, hatred etc. are also diseases and worse than the physical ones. But for *Ramanama*, there is no cure for them.

—*Uruli*: Mar. 23, 1946.

Uncleanliness of mind is more dangerous than that of the body; the outer uncleanliness is, however, but an indication of the inner one.

—*Uruli*: Mar. 24, 1946.

Who can describe the joy and happiness that one experiences by taking shelter in God?

—*Uruli*: Mar. 25, 1946.

Ramanama is helpful to those who fulfil the conditions of its recitation.

—*New Delhi*: Apr. 8, 1946.

Repetition of *Ramanama* becomes in vain if no corresponding service worthy of *Rama* is rendered.

—*New Delhi*: Apr. 21, 1946.

The fear of illness accounts for more deaths than the illness itself.

—*Simla*: May 7, 1946.

For the cure of threefold malady, *Ramanama* is a sure remedy.

—*New Delhi*: May 24, 1946.

He who seeks refuge in *Ramanama* obtains the satisfaction of all his desires.

—*New Delhi*: May 25, 1946.

If one wants to drink the nectar of *Ramanama*, it is but necessary that one should drive out lust, anger etc.

—*New Delhi*: June 20, 1946.

When all is well, then, of course, everyone takes the name of God; but a true devotee is he who remembers God when all goes awry.

—*Bombay*: July 6, 1946.

The elixir of *Ramanama* imparts joy to the soul and rids the body of its ailment.

—*Poona*: July 9, 1946.

TWO LETTERS

“The more reliance we place on God, the more peace of mind shall we have. *Vaidyas* and doctors are there, of course, but they take us farther away from God.”

Yeravda Mandir,
Nov. 12, 1930.

Dear.....

For the health of your body you should take sitz and sun baths. And for the peace of mind, *Ramanama* is the best balm. Restrain yourself when any passion troubles you. There is only one way of walking in the light of God and that is to serve His creation. Indeed, there is no other meaning of God's grace or light.

BAPU'S BLESSINGS.

II

Sevagram,
Jan. 9, 1945

Dear.....

Your letter. Whether you get well or not—what does it matter? The more reliance we place on God, the more peace of mind shall we have. *Vaidyas* and doctors are there, of course; but they take us farther away from God. That's why I preferred to send you there. Nature Cure treatment brings us nearer to God. I will have no objection whatever if we could do even without it. But why be afraid of fast or avoid pure air? The meaning of Nature Cure is to go nearer Nature—God. Let us see how far I succeed in this. I will certainly not overstrain myself.

BAPU'S BLESSINGS.

QUESTION BOX

WEeping AND LAUGHING

Q. What makes a person weep and laugh ?

A. Weeping and laughing are just a condition of the mind. A person weeps when he feels pain and laughs when he regards the same as pleasure. Therefore it is that *Ramanama* must be our mainstay in life. To dedicate everything to Him is to enjoy real peace and bliss.

VOCAL RECITATION

Q. While in conversation or doing brain work or when one is suddenly worried, can one recite *Ramanama* (the name of God) in one's heart ? Do people do so at such times, and if so, how ?

A. Experience shows that man can do so at any time, even in sleep, provided *Ramanama* is enshrined in his heart. If the taking of the name has become a habit, its recitation through the heart becomes as natural as the heart beat. Otherwise, *Ramanama* is a mere mechanical performance or, at best, has touched the heart only on the surface. When *Ramanama* has established its dominion over the heart, the question of vocal recitation does not arise. Because, then, it transcends speech. But it may well be held that persons who have attained this state are few and far between.

There is no doubt whatsoever that *Ramanama* contains all the power that is attributed to it. No one can, by mere wishing, enshrine *Ramanama* in his heart. Untiring effort is required as also patience. What an amount of labour and patience have been lavished by men to acquire the non-existent philosopher's stone ? Surely, God's name is of infinitely richer value and always existent.

SERVICE OR THE ROSARY ?

Q. Is it harmful if, owing to stress or exigencies of work, one is unable to carry out daily devotions in the prescribed manner ? Which of the two should be given preference ? Service or the rosary ?

A. Whatever the exigencies of service or adverse circumstances may be, *Ramanama* must not cease. The outward form will vary according to the occasion. The absence of the rosary does not interrupt *Ramanama* which has found an abiding place in the heart.

RAMANAMA

Q. Is it not enough to have *Ramanama* in one's heart, or is there something special in its recitation ?

A. I believe there is special merit in the recitation of *Ramanama*. If anyone knows that God is in truth residing in his heart, I admit that for him there is no need for recitation. But I have not known such a person. On the contrary, my personal experience tells me that there is something quite extraordinary in the recitation of *Ramanama*. Why or how is not necessary to know.

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